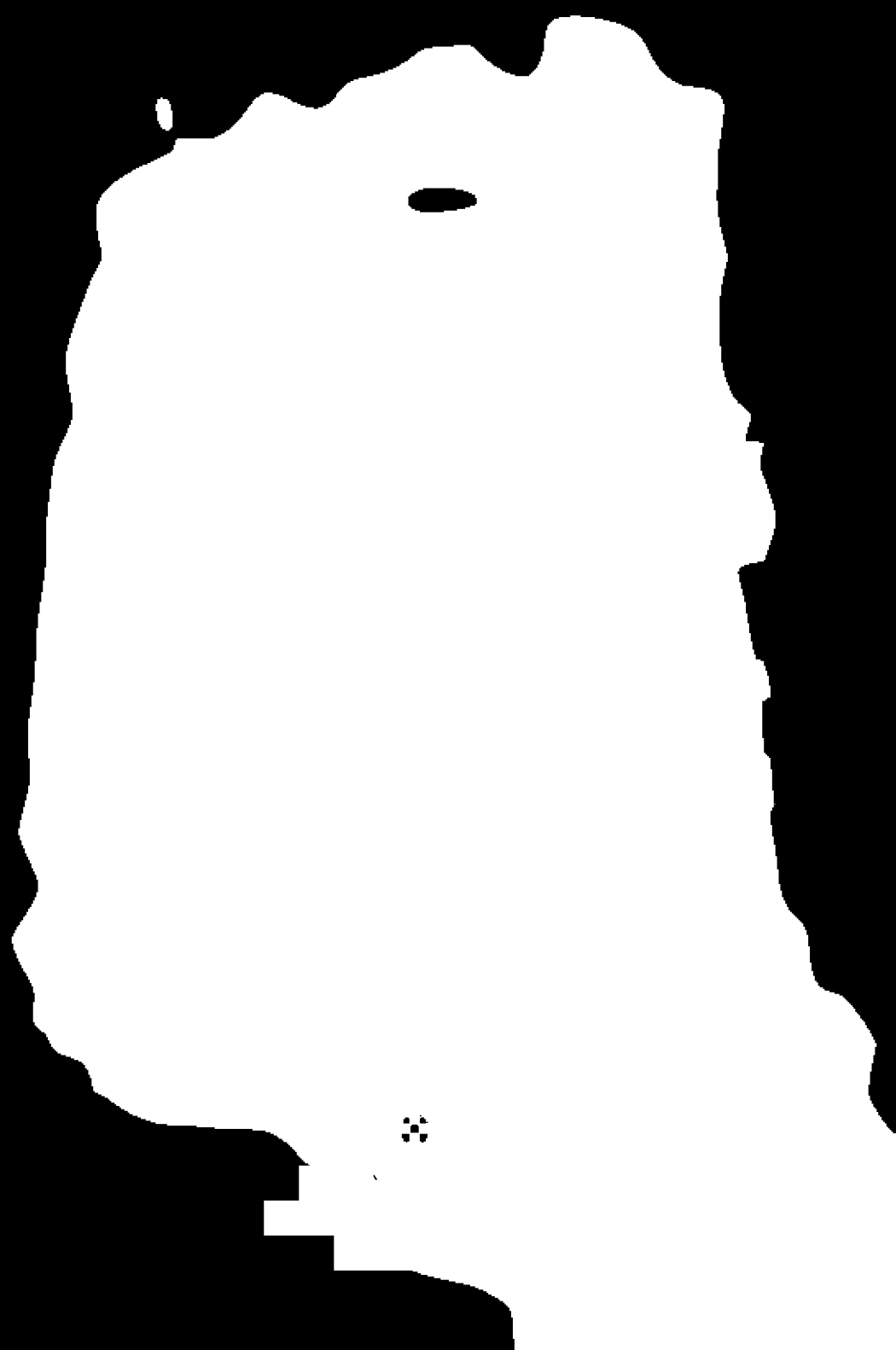


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THE RISE OF
SOCIAL DEMOCRACY
IN RUSSIA

BY
J. L. H. KEEP

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FOREWORD

It has often been remarked that many of the problems besetting the emergent nations today may be understood more clearly in the light of the history of Russia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The parallels are numerous and sometimes striking. Rapid industrialization, the development of modern communications, and the spread of education undermined popular respect for established authority. Millions of men and women in town and country were shocked into an awareness of the opportunities that existed for a radical transformation of their way of life. The autocracy was unable either to satisfy their demands or to suppress them. As the movement of protest grew stronger, intellectuals familiar with advanced Western thought strove to bring it under their own control and use it to overthrow the existing régime. The revolutionary dynamic was sufficiently powerful to bring about far-reaching changes within a relatively brief historical span. But it could also lead to the extinction of the ideals to which the masses themselves aspired, for the road from freedom to dictatorship is shorter than men generally believe.

Some sixty years ago Russia experienced the greatest social upheaval that Europe had seen since the French Revolution. Its significance was largely overlooked by contemporary observers in the West. Although there was a certain amount of sympathy among radicals for what was loosely termed 'the Russian liberation movement', little serious attention was given to the fundamental issues at stake. In Great Britain it was not until the First World War that Russian history and politics came to be recognized as fitting subjects for academic study. By this time there was a tremendous leeway to make up. It was only to be expected that the Russian crisis of 1904-7 should be by-passed, or treated simply as a prelude to the much greater cataclysm in 1917, rather than as a phenomenon in its own right. Even now its history remains to be written.

The present volume does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of 'the first Russian revolution', but is concerned with one relatively limited problem: the role played by the Social-Democratic Party. It was in 1905 that this party was first able to exercise a significant influence on the Russian political scene. Its activities can only be understood in the light of its basic philosophy, which took shape in the 1880's, and its history during the formative years of development, in the late 1890's and early 1900's. Chiefly for reasons of space, less detailed consideration has been given here to the years 1906-7, when

the revolution was in decline and the Party once again found itself on the defensive.

Western students of Marxism in Russia have hitherto concentrated on the personalities of the Party's leaders, especially Lenin, and the evolution of Bolshevik thought. It may be readily admitted that the biographical approach has certain advantages when dealing with a theme of this kind, and that due attention has to be paid to ideological controversy. But men's actions and ideas are best understood when seen in their historical setting. For this reason the emphasis has here been laid first and foremost upon the Party itself, as an institution. In this respect the theme of this volume is close to that treated, in his monumental history of the C.P.S.U., by Mr. Leonard Schapiro, whom it has been my good fortune to know personally, and to whom I owe a special debt of gratitude for his kindness and encouragement. I am also glad to acknowledge the stimulus I have received from the work of Professor L. Haimson, Professor D. W. Treadgold, Mr. B. D. Wolfe, and a number of other experts in the field, whose views I have seldom found it necessary to call in question. My aim has been to supplement their labours, not supplant them.

Two principal difficulties confront the student of Russian Social Democracy. One is the scarcity of reliable source material bearing on some of the most important issues, and the almost embarrassing wealth of detailed information available about particular aspects of the movement, not invariably of great historical interest. Most of the contemporary material is extremely partisan. A good deal of useful information can be gleaned from memoir literature, although most of these works were written long after the events they describe, and Bolsheviks had more opportunity than Mensheviks to commit their recollections to print. The various historical institutes set up in Soviet Russia after the revolution produced a flood of valuable books and articles. Unfortunately, from the mid-1920's onwards the principle of *partiynost'* ('Party-mindedness', partiality) came to be applied with the utmost strictness. Nowhere was it more rigidly enforced than in the treatment of the Party's own history. For ideological reasons the Soviet leaders have always regarded this as a highly sensitive topic. The non-Communist historian, whatever his point of view, cannot but recognize the fact that an unbridgeable gulf exists between himself and his Marxist-Leninist colleagues, whose objectives and methods necessarily differ from those generally accepted outside the Soviet orbit. In view of this fundamental cleavage, little purpose would seem to be served by endeavouring to challenge or refute the official interpretation of the events treated here. The Soviet academic presses are now turning out a vast amount of material on the history of Russia during the so-called

'imperialist epoch'. The principal documentary collection devoted to the 1905 revolution runs to some 5,000 pages, and there are many more specialized volumes dealing with particular regions of the country. A thorough critical examination of this literature would require a lifetime of research and would contribute relatively little to an understanding of the period. If this task is to be undertaken at all by Western historians, it is perhaps best postponed to the day when plenty of manpower becomes available.

The second difficulty is one of perspective. Such interest as the early history of Russian Social Democracy possesses stems less from the contribution which the Party made to Russian history at that time than from the fact that, out of these humble and inauspicious beginnings, there grew a political system which could eventually claim the allegiance of a third of the world's population. It is thus necessary to consider the Party's teachings and actions from the standpoint of their implicit as well as their immediate significance, while remembering that the proper task of the historian is to describe and analyse the past, rather than to draw moral lessons from it for the present. The prerogative of hindsight can be both a help and a hindrance. Today few people will find themselves able to share the early Russian Marxists' own limitless confidence in the liberating potentialities of proletarian revolution. A world that has experienced the horrors of totalitarian rule must inevitably entertain a certain scepticism towards the proponents of all-embracing ideological creeds, however enlightened they may profess to be. The passage of time enforces its own revaluations, and shows that beliefs once deemed proven beyond all doubt were in fact no more than pious myths. Some readers may feel that in these pages less than justice has been done to the courage and idealism of men who sought, in most cases sincerely, to promote the well-being of the oppressed masses. Others may consider that insufficient weight has been given to the dictatorial tendencies latent in Marxism or radical socialism as such, irrespective of the milieu in which they are applied. To these critics the present writer can only plead that he has endeavoured to be fair to all points of view, but that an element of personal bias is unavoidable. Some readers may perhaps share his own prejudice against humbug and intolerance.

This book is based in part on a London University Ph.D. thesis. I wish to express my profound gratitude to all those who have so generously helped me with advice and support: in particular, to Dr. G. H. Bolsover, O.B.E., Director of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in the University of London, and Professor G. H. N. Seton-Watson, Professor of Russian History in the University of London, to both of whom I am much in debt; to the Council of the Russian

Institute of Columbia University, New York, and to the former Director, Professor Henry L. Roberts, for granting me a Senior Fellowship at the Institute and enabling me to undertake research for this book in New York; to Professor Philip E. Mosely and the Administrative Committee of the Archive of Russian and East European History and Culture at Columbia University, for granting me access to its valuable materials, and to the Curator, Mr. L. F. Magerovsky, for his guidance; to Mrs. L. I. Dan, Mr. B. I. Nikolaevsky, Mr. N. V. Volsky, and many others associated with the Inter-University Project on the History of the Menshevik Movement; to the authorities of the Free University of Berlin, and to Professor W. Philipp, former Director of the Osteuropa-Institut, for making it possible for me to study at this Institute; to Professor Dr. A. J. C. Rüter, Director of the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, for permission to consult and quote from documents in the Axelrod Archive and other collections, and to Dr. J. Meijer; to the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, Paris, for access to its extensive collection of source material; and to H.M. Treasury Committee on Studentships in Foreign Languages and Cultures for enabling me to undertake post-graduate study. My final privilege is to pay tribute to my wife, without whose forbearance and constant encouragement this book would never have been written.

Note. The term 'the Party' as used in this volume refers to the R.S.D.R.P. (Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party: see p. 53). Most Russian revolutionaries used pseudonyms. Individuals are referred to here by the name by which they are best known; in the case of the more important figures, their real names are given when they are mentioned for the first time.

Dates are Old Style, except where they relate to events outside Russia, when the letters N.S. are added. To convert dates from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, twelve days should be added in the nineteenth century and thirteen in the twentieth.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Russian rouble was normally worth 2s. 1½d.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- DiM* *Revolyutsiya 1905–7 gg. v Rossii: dokumenty i materialy.* Edited by A. M. Pankratova and others. (Moscow, 1955–in progress.)
- KiS* *Katorga i Ssylka.* (Moscow, 1921–35.)
- Lenin* V. I. Lenin. *Sochineniya.* 3rd ed. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1934–5.)
- OD* *Obshchestvennoye dvizhenie v Rossii v nachale XX-go veka.* Edited by L. Martov and others. (St. Petersburg, 1909–14.)
- Perepiska* *Perepiska G. V. Plekhanova i P. B. Aksel'roda.* Edited by P. A. Berlin and others. (Moscow, 1925.)
- Pis'ma* *Pis'ma P. B. Aksel'roda i Yu. O. Martova.* (Berlin, 1924.)
- Plekhanov* G. V. Plekhanov. *Sochineniya.* Edited by D. Ryazanov. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1923–6.)
- PR* *Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya.* (Moscow, 1921–41.)
- Prot. II* *Vtoroy s'yezd RSDRP, yul'—avgust 1903 g.: protokoly.* (Moscow, 1959.)
- Prot. III* *Tretyy s'yezd RSDRP, aprel'—may 1905 g.: protokoly.* (Moscow, 1959.)
- Prot. IV* *Chetvertyy (ob'yedinitel'nyy) s'yezd RSDRP, aprel' (aprel'—may) 1906 g.: protokoly.* (Moscow, 1959.)
- Prot. V* *Protokoly s'yездov VKP(b): pyatyy s'yezd 1907 g.* (Moscow, 1935.)

I

THE FORGING OF THE FAITH

A TRAVELLER to Russia in 1900 might be forgiven for concluding that the autocratic régime was as strongly entrenched as ever. Out of a population of nearly 130 millions no more than a few thousand actively sought its overthrow. The monarchy was beyond doubt a popular institution. The army, the police and all other instruments of authority were firmly under the Government's control.

A more thorough examination would have shown this first impression to be superficial. The absolutist system was chronically ill-fitted to resolve the problems of a rapidly modernizing society. No sense of purpose, no vision of Russia's future greatness, inspired the cautious and pedestrian officials who administered the Tsar's vast domains. In the 'ruling spheres', as they were called, the prevailing spirit was one of inertia. Decisions on crucial problems were deferred, or relegated to obscure bureaucratic committees for dilatory consideration. More often than not the measures decreed were mere palliatives. There did not as yet exist a central executive body—let alone a legislature—to fashion policy or co-ordinate the work of the various departments. Ministers were free to pursue ancient feuds and rivalries. At court they would jostle one another for influence and patronage. In this respect the situation deteriorated after 1894, when Nicholas II acceded to the throne. The young Tsar did not inherit his father's strength of character, but was equally determined to uphold at all costs the sacred principle of autocracy.

The course he chose to follow was bound to widen the gulf between 'authority' and 'society'—*vlast* and *obshchestvennost*, in the terminology of the day. The possibility arose that the monarchy, by deliberately isolating itself from public opinion, might lose all freedom of manœuvre and endanger its own existence. For the Russian body politic lacked natural cohesion. It was held together by a combination of various forces: traditional peasant loyalty to the crown; the vested interest of the socially dominant elements in a strong central authority; and an elementary fear of the physical consequences of opposition. There was not, in the Russia of 1900, a well-articulated sense of community, comparable with that to be found at this time in the nation-states of Western Europe. In the Tsar's multi-national empire authority was imposed from above, upon a population that in normal times

accepted it passively and uncomplainingly, but did not have any deep feeling of identification with it. The risk was ever present that, if the control exerted by the central power should be seriously weakened, the whole brittle structure might dissolve into anarchy.

To understand why this was so it is necessary to bear in mind how few points of contact there were between the official world and the mass of Russian citizens. The people lived out their lives in autonomous communities, or as members of a corporate group of some kind, with only occasional interference from the bureaucracy. The police were the only officials who had any first-hand knowledge of the actual state of affairs at the local level, and they normally refrained from action until they were faced with some contravention of the law. The average man, whether peasant or city-dweller, could expect to preserve his privacy by keeping on friendly terms with the police—if circumstances warranted, perhaps at the price of a modest bribe. In the lower reaches of the administrative hierarchy corruption was rife. Its effects were not wholly contemptible: it softened the rigours of the bureaucratic system. On the other hand, it undoubtedly helped to weaken respect for the law.

The Russian judicial machine was the finest product of the Alexandrine reforms. But in conservative quarters the courts were seen as alien to the country's traditions, and their independence was by no means assured. The legal profession, which included many liberal-minded men with high standards of integrity, was obliged to wage a continual struggle against encroachments on its rights by the executive power. The population at large lacked a strong sense of legality. This was the unfortunate legacy bequeathed by centuries of autocracy and serfdom. Even after emancipation in 1861 the peasants were still denied all the advantages of the new legal system. Men of humble birth or status enjoyed far from adequate protection against arbitrary acts by those more fortunately placed. They were thereby encouraged in the view that fundamental improvements in their way of life could best be brought about by violence rather than by a gradual development of existing institutions.

It was only to be expected that in an under-developed agrarian country, with such vast extremes of wealth and poverty, social conflicts should take an acute form. The last two tsars helped to make the problem worse by pursuing an extremely conservative social policy. Their aim was to consolidate the power of the autocracy by buttressing the privileges of the landed gentry. Characteristic was the legislation of 1890 which enhanced their dominant position in most elective organs of local government, municipalities as well as rural *zemstva*. This ill-considered experiment in reaction was doomed to fail. The emancipation of the serfs had dealt the Russian gentry a body-blow from which

they never recovered. Between 1877 and 1905 their holdings of land shrank by a third—despite the efforts on their behalf of the Nobles' Land Bank, founded in 1885 with the express object of enabling them to retain possession of their estates. Moreover, Western ideas had long since undermined the gentry's spirit of class exclusiveness. To the Government's consternation the *zemstva* soon emerged as the standard-bearers of liberalism. Those landowners who were in close contact with the realities of Russian rural life could not but recognize the necessity for a bold approach to the agrarian question. This was the central issue on which the country's whole future depended.

At the close of the nineteenth century peasants still comprised some four-fifths of the total population. Their economic situation was in most areas precarious. Crop failure led periodically to disastrous famines and epidemics. In the forty years that followed the emancipation the rural population increased by more than two-thirds, but this was accompanied by only a marginal rise in the productivity of peasant farming. The problem was essentially the now familiar one of 'agrarian over-population', i.e. of providing alternative employment for surplus rural labour and sufficient capital to stimulate the adoption of more advanced techniques. Contemporaries tended to evade or over-simplify the issues at stake. Intellectuals were almost unanimous in laying the blame for peasant misery on the terms of the 'great reform'. This, they argued, had been excessively generous to the landowning interest: the peasants had been allocated insufficient land and had been forced to pay for it at an inflated price; these redemption dues, added to heavy taxes, imposed a burden far heavier than they could be expected to bear. The Government, for its part, approached the problem largely from the standpoint of internal security. In the 1880's the Ministry of the Interior sought to strengthen the powers of rural authorities at all levels. Many influential conservatives believed that the commune (*obshchina*, *mir*) acted as a beneficent stabilizing force. In many areas the village authorities periodically re-distributed the land to ensure a rough correlation between the resources and obligations of each household. This, it was held, served to hinder the emergence in Russia of a landless proletariat, which was likely to give a potent stimulus to social unrest. Many Russian intellectuals shared this high regard for the *obshchina*, but for the reverse reason. They saw it as a stepping-stone to an egalitarian socialist order. Both the right and the left underestimated the importance of the commune as an obstacle to economic advance. It restricted mobility of labour, perpetuated the wasteful system of strip cultivation, diverted individual enterprise into unhealthy speculative channels, and fostered social antagonism.

The harm done by the commune was as much psychological as

economic. It was responsible for the general spirit of hopeless apathy that hung over the countryside, as well as the tendencies to anarchic rebellion that made themselves felt in 1905 and 1917. To the average peasant in one of the distressed areas the cause of his poverty was simple: lack of land. He dreamed of a great 'black', or general, repartition of property, in which the wealth of the privileged would be seized and shared out fairly among those who tilled the soil. The mood of sullen resentment was strongest in the rich but overcrowded 'black earth' belt, stretching from the province of Poltava to the middle reaches of the Volga. Other regions had equally serious problems. In the area north and east of Moscow the old-established craft industries on which the peasants depended for their livelihood were now in rapid decline. In the Baltic provinces and in some south-western districts there was a class of landless agricultural labourers whose earnings barely sufficed for their subsistence. Equally insecure was the position of the seasonal workers who brought in the harvest on the great estates of the southern Ukraine. In parts of Transcaucasia the peasants were little better than serfs. Wherever the privileged elements belonged to a different ethnic group, the movement of social protest could acquire national overtones that made it doubly explosive. But for the most part peasant opposition took a spontaneous and instinctive form, as was only to be expected in view of the low cultural standards that prevailed. Despite heroic efforts by the more enlightened *zemstva*, education had as yet made relatively little impression upon the rural population in most areas of the country. According to the 1897 census only 25 per cent. of men and 10 per cent. of women outside the cities were literate¹. In the 1880's and 1890's the Government attempted to offset the work of the *zemstva* by promoting parish schools, run by the Holy Synod, with a simple curriculum strongly weighted in favour of religious instruction. Despite these efforts the evidence suggests that the Orthodox Church was losing ground, particularly among the younger generation. There might still be an icon in every *izba*, but the parish priest was seldom a highly respected figure. In some localities rationalistic religious sects had a strong appeal. By and large, however, the peasants lived in an intellectual vacuum. Their traditional outlook was being rapidly undermined. To city-dwellers their mentality was something of a riddle. Educated persons were wont to speak of their 'darkness' (*temnota*). The assumption was that this would be replaced by 'enlightenment', in the shape of some radical secular ideology. But no one could be certain.

It was somewhat easier to predict the orientation of the industrial

¹ A. G. Rashin, in *Istoricheskiye zapiski* (1951), no. 37, p. 37.

workers, whose intellectual horizons had been broadened by urban life. It was largely through them that new ideas penetrated into the countryside, shaking it from its ancient slumber. By 1900 they clearly formed a social group of considerable importance, although contemporary observers disagreed on the extent to which they had become divorced from their peasant origins. In the early stages of industrialization peasants were employed in the factories on a seasonal basis, often working in a different enterprise each year. There was a very high rate of labour turnover. P. N. Lyashchenko, the Soviet economic historian, affirms that in 1899 as many as 56 per cent. of those working in industry were 'hereditary proletarians'—i.e. men whose fathers had been similarly employed.¹ The ties that bound the worker to his native village were certainly weakening. The majority were still registered as members of a commune, but this was usually a mere formality. In the early 1900's an official investigation ascertained that 18 per cent. of the workers in the Moscow area returned annually to help with the harvest, while 30 per cent. still owned an allotment of land. The average for the whole country was 28 per cent.²

The cultural and psychological affinities between workers and peasants in Russia were particularly striking when judged by Western European standards. In considering this question due attention must be paid to regional differences. The most Europeanized in their way of life were the workers in the metallurgical plants and textile mills of Russian Poland, of whom there were more than 200,000 at the turn of the century. The Baltic provinces were also well advanced: Riga, for example, was a flourishing port and industrial centre, with a wide range of enterprises employing both Letts and Russians. The province of St. Petersburg, which had an industrial population of some 100,000 in 1900, was the most westernized region in ethnically Russian territory. By this is meant that its enterprises were larger and relatively advanced from a technological standpoint, and that the workers employed there were more highly skilled, better paid and educated, and more individualistic in their outlook than they were in areas where the old patriarchal ways survived. In towns of the west and south-west such as Vilno, Mogilev, or Kiev, the tone was set by fairly small concerns, employing craftsmen of various nationalities: Russians, Poles, and especially Jews. The latter were permitted by law to reside only within the so-called 'pale of settlement'. Here overcrowding and intense

¹ P. N. Lyashchenko, *Istoriya narodnogo khozyaystva SSSR* (Lg., 1947), ii. 170.

² D. Koltsov, in *Obshchestvennoye dvizhenie v Rossii v nachale XX-go veka*, ed. L. Martov, A. Potresov, and P. Maslov, Spb., 1909-14 [hereafter cited as *OD*], i. 183.

competition led to extensive pauperism. South and east of Kiev the Ukraine underwent a startling transformation during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, as a result of the development of its rich mineral resources. By 1900 Kharkov and Yekaterinoslav (now Dnepropetrovsk) had an industrial population of 30,000 and 25,000 respectively, while the region as a whole had nearly a quarter of a million workers. The discovery of oil in Transcaucasia also brought major social changes in its train. The number of workpeople in Baku leaped from 6,800 in 1895 to 30,000 five years later. Among them were Armenians, Azerbaijani Tartars, Persians, Georgians, and Russians. The city was an ethnic kaleidoscope, and its spirit one of reckless pioneering enterprise. By contrast, the long-established central industrial region experienced a more steady growth. Here were gathered over half a million men and women, nearly two-fifths of all those employed in manufacturing within the borders of the empire. Characteristic of this area were great textile centres such as Ivanovo-Voznesensk or Orekhovo-Zuyevo, in the province of Vladimir. Each of these settlements, once obscure villages, now provided a livelihood for tens of thousands of workers. The atmosphere was still in many ways patriarchal. In the Urals conditions were even more archaic. Russia's oldest industrial region was now in decline, but had a labour force some 130,000 strong.¹

According to official statistics a total of 2.2 million workers were employed in mining and manufacturing industries in 1900. If one includes those not subject to the factory inspectorate, a figure of approximately two and a half million is obtained. To this one may add another half a million employed in transport and approximately 300,000 building operatives in urban areas, making 3.3 million in all.² This seems a paltry figure when set against a total population (in 1897) of 129 million. But the industrial workers were concentrated in key centres from which, if they acted in an organized manner, they could exercise an influence out of all proportion to their numerical strength.

The conditions in which they lived approximated to those in Western Europe during the early phases of the industrial revolution. The value of wages appears to have risen slowly until the mid-1890's, and then to have declined. After 1900 the average annual rate of increase has been

¹ R. S. Livshits, *Razmeshchenie promyshlennosti v dorevol'yutsionnoy Rossii* (M., 1955), pp. 150ff.

² A. G. Rashin, in *Istoricheskiye zapiski* (1954), no. 46, pp. 127-81; A. V. Pogozhev, *Uchet chislennosti i sostava rabochikh v Rossii* (Spb., 1906), p. 35; V. I. Kovalevsky (ed.), *Rossiya v kontse XIX v.*, (Spb., 1900), pp. 560-1; M. I. Tugan-Baranovsky, *Russkaya fabrika v proshlom i nastoyashchem*, 6th ed. (M.-Lg., 1934), pp. 348-59; V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniya*, 3rd ed. (M.-Lg., 1931) [hereafter cited as *Lenin*], iii. 388.

estimated at 1·7 per cent. per annum.¹ A general figure for the whole country is not particularly revealing, since there were very marked differences between various branches of industry and geographical regions. An operative in a Moscow textile mill might well earn half as much as one in a metal-working plant, and the latter half as much as a man employed in the same capacity in Riga. Within the enterprise, too, there were very wide differentials between skilled men and unskilled labourers. In 1900 the average wage for an adult male in a Moscow cotton mill was fifteen roubles per month. This meant that he had to work for approximately one and a half hours to buy one pound of meat, five days to buy a suit of the cheapest quality, and two weeks to buy a pair of boots.² His diet was simple and monotonous, but according to medical opinion nutritionally adequate—although this was less true of women workers. Although no specimen budgets are available, it appears that wages sufficed for the barest essentials. One factor frequently overlooked is the heavy burden imposed on many factory workers by their obligation to send money back to their villages to support elderly or impoverished relatives.

By 1900 wages were paid regularly and in cash, although often at insufficiently frequent intervals. The practice of levying fines for sub-standard work caused a great deal of ill-feeling. The task of assessing these sums, and rates of payment for piece-work, was carried out by foremen who were sometimes tempted to abuse their authority. Much unrest could have been averted if industrialists had taken the trouble to ensure proper channels of communication within their enterprises. It was not until 1903 that a tentative beginning was made in this direction, with the introduction in some of the larger and more progressive concerns of elected elders (*starosty*). On the whole it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that at this period those in positions of authority in Russian industry were remarkably blind to the human aspects of efficient management. The scene was one of sharp contrasts: on one hand, the rapid pace of development; on the other, the backwardness and crudity frequently shown in relations between the employers and their workpeople. This was of course largely a reflection of cultural standards in the country as a whole.

¹ O. Goebel, *Entwicklungsgang der russischen Industriearbeiter bis zur 1. Revolution* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1920), p. 24.

² Calculated from data in Goebel, pp. 27ff.; cf. K. A. Pazhitnov, *Ocherki istorii tekstil'noy promyshlennosti dorevolyutsionnoy Rossii* (M., 1955), p. 214. On industrial conditions generally, cf. I. Kh. Ozerov, *Politika po rabochemu voprosu v Rossii za posledniye gody* (M., 1906); K. A. Pazhitnov, *Polozhenie rabocheho klassa v Rossii* (Spb., 1906); M. Gordon, *Workers before and after Lenin* (N.Y., 1942); G. V. Rimlinger, 'Autocracy and the factory order in early Russian industrialization', in *Journal of Econ. History* (1960), xx. 67-92.

At a comparatively early date the Government introduced legislation to regulate conditions of labour in industry. These measures were inspired less by social or humanitarian motives than by concern for public order, and were very loosely applied in practice. They did not, for example, relate to smaller factories with less than twenty employees. Several decrees promulgated between 1882 and 1885 had the effect of restricting the number of hours worked by women and juveniles. A factory inspectorate was established to ensure that their provisions were observed. But the inspectors soon incurred suspicion in official quarters on account of their liberal tendencies, and the scope of their activities was curtailed. The length of the working day for adult males was not regulated until 1897, when the law of 2 June fixed the permitted maximum at eleven and a half hours (ten hours on Saturdays and the eve of twelve official holidays). Night work was limited to ten hours, while overtime was made conditional on a voluntary agreement between the employer and the individual workman. Despite its loopholes this was an important milestone in Russian industrial legislation. Prior to 1897 the standard working day in a St. Petersburg metallurgical plant was from twelve to thirteen hours, and in a Moscow textile mill from fourteen to fifteen hours.¹

Statistics can convey only a most inadequate impression of the actual situation in which the Russian working-man found himself. If he was a mill-hand in the Moscow area, he lived in a world bounded by the walls of his factory compound. The enterprise at which he worked was a self-sufficient unit, which in theory at least catered for all his wants. He slept in the factory dormitory, took his meals in the factory dining-hall, and sent his children—if he was fortunate—to the factory school. When he left the premises, which he did but rarely, he showed his pass to the factory guards, who searched him for stolen goods or contraband. In summer his leisure hours were spent mainly in the central courtyard. This served as the general meeting-place, and was the scene of the most important events in the life of this closely-knit community. In the factories, as in the villages, the principal means of relaxation was strong liquor. Organized forms of recreation were almost unknown, and efforts by private welfare associations to bring educational and cultural facilities within the workers' reach were still in their infancy—although in the western and north-western provinces the situation was more promising than it was in the Moscow area. Regional differences were also important in determining standards of accommodation. In the earliest phase of industrialization, when casual employment was the rule, men left their families in their native villages, and while in the factory slept in communal dormitories or even in the workshops, beside

¹ V. I. Kovalevsky, p. 217.

their machines. The construction of blocks of married quarters was thus a sign of progress, even though they lacked civilized amenities. These dismal barrack-like buildings contained rows of cubicles, each as a rule shared by more than one family. In the more advanced regions workers tended, where they could afford to do so, to rent accommodation outside the factory premises. Their lodgings might consist of no more than the corner of a room, but the step signified progress towards the standards usual in the more industrialized countries of the West, where conditions, as the Russian workman was now beginning to realize, were vastly superior. This trend towards individualism, which implied a growing awareness of basic human rights, was the best evidence of the progress that Russia was making along the path of westernization.¹

In the circumstances there was bound to be a fair amount of disaffection, leading to strikes and other manifestations of labour unrest. The intensity of this feeling, and the manner in which it was expressed, varied according to the place which a particular group of workers occupied on the ladder of social evolution. The most recent recruits to industry were conscious of having improved their economic position *vis-à-vis* their fellow-villagers. At the same time they felt bewildered by their unfamiliar environment and found it difficult to adjust themselves to the rhythm of industrial life. Unused to taking co-ordinated steps to attain specific goals, they would ventilate their resentment in a primitive elemental form, by rioting or engaging in indiscriminate violence against all symbols of authority. If a strike were called they were the first to break faith with their fellows, since they were least able to bear the material deprivations which such action entailed. This helps to explain why strikes in Russia at this time were on the average shorter in duration than they were in Western Europe.² At the other end of the scale were the better-paid and more experienced workers, who felt most keenly the need to win greater security of employment and other concessions. They were naturally sympathetic to the idea of forming permanent labour organizations of the trade-union type.

Efforts in this direction aroused acute nervousness in official circles. It was only with great reluctance that the Government permitted the existence of voluntary friendly societies. In the absence of a State pension scheme, and with commercial insurance companies charging high premiums, these were the only organizations that offered workers some protection against the risk of accident or sickness. They operated

¹ G. von Schulze-Gävernitz, *Volkswirtschaftliche Studien aus Russland* (Leipzig, 1899), pp. 146ff.; K. A. Pazhitnov, *Polozhenie rabochego klassa . . .*, pp. 125ff.

² V. Grinevich, *Professional'noye dvizhenie rabochikh v Rossii* (Spb., 1908), p. 153.

mainly in the western provinces, and were kept under close administrative control. (It goes without saying that no safeguards existed against loss of employment.) Prior to 1906 any independent labour organization, such as a trade union, was expressly forbidden by law. The penal code laid down that members of any association which sought 'to incite hatred . . . between employers and workers, or to foment strikes' were liable to penalties ranging from eight months imprisonment in a fortress to exile for life. If the organization were deemed particularly dangerous (if, for example, it comprised two or more 'circles' under a central directing authority, or if it incited men to violence), its members could be sentenced to a maximum of six years hard labour. Until 1905 a strike, even if unorganized, was also a penal offence, for which those held responsible could be detained for a period of eight months.¹ These laws were interpreted flexibly. Serious disturbances with political implications were dealt with outside the courts by 'administrative procedure'. In August 1897 the Ministry of the Interior advised provincial authorities not to institute judicial proceedings against strikers, but to banish them to their place of domicile—a measure that had adverse results even from a narrow security point of view, since the men punished in this way carried the idea of revolt into the villages.

This repressive policy had the inevitable consequence of directing the Russian labour movement into clandestine channels. The older and more experienced workers, denied a legitimate outlet for their aspirations, lapsed into apathetic resignation. They were reluctant to engage in activities likely to bring them into conflict with the police. But they had no great interest in obstructing them. It was thus relatively easy for youthful leaders of 'advanced' views to win support. By the turn of the century some people in senior positions, particularly in the Ministry of the Interior, had begun to doubt whether this negative approach accorded with the best interests of the autocracy. They suggested that, by permitting labour organizations on a limited scale, under tight police control, the workers could be induced to remain neutral towards political questions, and might even be converted into pillars of support for the régime.² These ideas were opposed with particular vehemence by the Ministry of Finance. S. Yu. Witte, who had done so much to promote Russia's industrialization, was primarily concerned to ensure continued economic expansion; to this end he was prepared to go far in upholding the interests of the employers. Nowhere were the consequences of the lack of co-ordination in official policy felt so acutely as in the inter-departmental conflict waged over the labour question. The truth of the matter was that the government of Nicholas II had no clear policy at all on this vital issue.

¹ *Svod zakonov ugodovnykh*, §§ 318, 1358.

² See below, pp. 102–6.

The conservatives were as yet only dimly aware of the significance of the struggle in which they were irrevocably engaged—a struggle for the allegiance of the volatile force now concentrated in Russia's principal cities. The contestants were unevenly matched. On one hand were the upholders of the *status quo*, equipped with the whole panoply of the bureaucratic state, but lacking ideals with popular appeal. Facing them, armed only with the millennarian promise of a just, free and equal society, were the most active elements in the radical intelligentsia.

From the days of the Decembrists onwards Russian intellectuals had spearheaded the movement for political and social change. Today it is a commonplace to see this phenomenon—not as something unique, as it appeared to many at the time—but as a symptom of the country's 'under-development'. A bare forty years earlier Russia's pattern of social organization had still been basically medieval. This was too short a period in which to develop an articulate urban middle class. In 1897 less than 13 per cent. of the population of European Russia lived in towns, as against 41 per cent. in France, 54 per cent. in Germany, and 77 per cent. in Great Britain.¹ Industrialists, bankers, and business men formed a tiny segment of the community. Politically they tended to be conservative, in part because they owed their prosperity to the Government's endeavours to foster economic development. The intellectuals, on the other hand, had a natural bias towards radicalism. They were held together by the common bond of a Western-style education which had opened their eyes to the defects of the existing political and social order. Attempts to implement enlightened principles soon brought them into conflict with established authority. Unable to apply their talents to practical affairs, many of them turned with redoubled fervour to the world of ideas. As scholars, writers, or artists they helped to give nineteenth-century Russian culture its international reputation. The obstacles placed in their way by the censorship were a goad rather than a hindrance to self-expression. Others nursed their bitterness in ill-paid and unsatisfying posts as junior civil servants or *zemstvo* employees. Although relatively few trod the perilous path of active opposition, even in normal times a large section of educated opinion was broadly sympathetic to declared enemies of the absolutist régime.

After several decades of intensive effort the radical intellectuals succeeded in building up a pattern of thought and behaviour that outlived all passing fashions in doctrine. Their most striking characteristic was their passionately moral approach to political and social problems.

¹ V. P. Litvinov-Falinsky, *Nashe ekonomicheskoye polozhenie i zadachi budushchego* (Spb., 1908), p. 8.

They would endorse even the most materialistic creed with all the fervour of the religious convert, dedicating themselves to their ideal of the good society with praiseworthy altruism. They had their prophets and evangelists, their saints and their martyrs. A somewhat puritanical code laid down rigorous criteria of virtue, and a set procedure was evolved for dealing with those who offended against its canons. Personal acquisitiveness was considered a mortal sin. It was taken for granted that satisfaction of private interests should at all times take second place to the furtherance of political objectives.

Russian radicals were deeply committed to the beliefs and illusions of an optimistic age. By and large they took it for granted that human nature was infinitely perfectible and that society should be re-modelled on scientific lines. They believed strongly in individual freedom, but equally strongly in the merits of collectivism. How were these two concepts to be reconciled? The usual response was to rely on the good sense of the common people, the *narod*. This was a term that evoked the profoundest emotions—and not only among those who called themselves *narodniki*, or Populists. There was a persistent belief that the Russian masses, once purified by the fires of revolution, would cast off, as if by magic, all the shortcomings that afflicted them in this present imperfect world. For the middle classes they had nothing but scorn. When Alexander Herzen condemned the 'bourgeoisie' for its mediocre philistinism (*meshchanstvo*) he established a tradition that was to endure for generations. In the eyes of those devoted to the service of great ideals no man was more contemptible than he who (as it was thought) pursued merely his own material advantage. Included in this condemnation were the supposedly bourgeois virtues of moderation and compromise. Radical intellectuals were convinced that a purely political reform, bringing to Russia the fruits of Western liberalism, would be of dubious benefit to the *narod*. Of what value were constitutions, parliaments, and paper freedoms to the impoverished and oppressed, engaged in a desperate struggle for physical survival? 'To a democrat', Nikolay Chernyshevsky had once written, 'our Siberia, where the simple people enjoy prosperity, is far superior to England, where the majority of the population lives in dire want.'¹ Not half-hearted political change, but only thorough-going revolution would solve Russia's problems. A few extremists—'nihilists', as they were sometimes inaccurately called—rejected the whole complex pattern of human relationships as it existed in their time, and dreamed of bringing about a total transformation. All the resources of the people were to be mobilized in a co-ordinated onslaught. Not only should literature, art,

¹ N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Polnoye sobranie sochineniy v 15 tomakh* (M., 1939–50), v. 216.

and every other aspect of culture be harnessed to political ends: every moral inhibition should be sacrificed as expediency demanded, for the sake of this supremely worth-while objective. Not all Russian radicals, of course, were prepared to go to such lengths. But most of them shared an exaggerated concern for ultimate goals and a corresponding neglect of immediate practical possibilities. This was a sign of their alienation from the society in which they lived. The revolutionary movement was an effort to find a common language with the only force capable of engineering that society's destruction. The *narod* was conceived of as an abstract entity capable of fulfilling, as they hoped, the particular mission which they mapped out for it. The tragedy of the Russian radical intellectuals was that they could never wholly bridge the chasm that separated them from the object of their attentions. The untutored popular masses saw in them members of that same social *élite* which they abhorred, and in adopting their ideals of freedom and progress gave them a particular interpretation of their own.

The lofty idealism that animated the Russian left in the nineteenth century had as its corollary a spirit of intolerance, the effects of which were felt, not only by extraneous enemies—the servants of the autocracy and the privileged classes—but also by those within the revolutionary camp who held differing views. The history of Russian radicalism is largely one of personal rifts between leaders, feuds between rival groups, and constant acrid polemics. Not even the minutest organizations were immune from the threat of rupture. This factionalism stemmed from the totality of the intellectuals' *Weltanschauung*. The tendency was for each group to believe that it alone held the key to salvation, and that the future depended upon its maintaining the purity of its ideas. The atmosphere of conflict was particularly bitter amidst the frustrations of life in emigration.

At the risk of over-simplification it may be said that the Populist thinkers of the Alexandrine age were divided into two schools: democratic and authoritarian.¹ Some took an optimistic view of the peasants' capacity to bring about revolution. It was they who 'went to the people' with the aim of learning as well as teaching. They laid more emphasis upon peaceful propaganda and cultural work than violent action. Others, more sceptical of the creative powers of the masses, believed that a minority of 'critically thinking individuals' had the right and duty to act on their behalf, and were prepared to use terrorist methods to achieve their ends. This *élitist* tendency found its frankest spokesman in P. N. Tkachev. He argued that the foundations of the

¹ On the Populists see the classic history by F. Venturi, *Roots of Revolution* (L., 1960), and J. H. Billington, *Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism* (Oxford, 1958).

peasants' communal way of life were threatened by 'the fire of economic progress', and that the autocracy was so enfeebled that, unless something were done to prevent it, Russia would have to endure a bourgeois constitutional order. If the cause of revolutionary socialism were to be saved, there was not a moment to lose. Political power should be seized by a group of zealous conspirators, who would then introduce a dictatorial régime in the best interests of the masses:

The people are unable to build, on the ruins of the old world, a new one capable of progressing or developing towards the communist ideal; therefore in constructing this new world it cannot and should not play any prominent or leading part. This role . . . belongs exclusively to the revolutionary minority. [After seizing power, this *élite*] . . . utilizing the destructive revolutionary force of the people, will eliminate the enemies of the revolution and, basing itself on the general spirit of the people's positive ideals (that is to say, on their conservative forces), will lay the foundations of a new rational order of society.¹

It is true that Tkachev had a negligible following, and that the leaders of the People's Will group (*Narodnaya Volya*) explicitly repudiated his ideas. Yet one reason why the latter turned to terrorism was because, like Tkachev, they had grown impatient at the peasants' tardy response to propaganda. Practical experience obliged them to renounce mass action and rely more and more upon their modest resources, concentrating their attention upon an attempt to assassinate the Tsar. On 1 March 1881, against all the odds, they achieved this goal. But it was a hollow victory, which exposed the false premisses on which the Populist movement rested. Tsar Alexander II was succeeded by Tsar Alexander III, and neither of the developments anticipated by the terrorists came to pass: Russia did not obtain a constitution, and the peasants failed to revolt. Indeed, the very idea that their *coup* might frighten the Government into granting liberal reforms contradicted some of the Populists' most cherished principles. In the 1880's the movement underwent a severe crisis. The leaders of the People's Will group were soon rounded up by the police and its organizations destroyed. Most radical intellectuals renounced political action and took refuge in unspectacular cultural work. The age of individual revolutionary heroes seemed to have passed for good. It was in this general atmosphere of disillusionment that Russian Social Democracy was born.

In Geneva, the main centre for nineteenth-century Russian political *émigrés*, some Populist leaders valiantly endeavoured to keep the spirit

¹ P. N. Tkachev, *Izbrannye sochineniya na sotsial-politicheskiye temy*, ed. B. P. Kozmin (M., 1933), iii. 265-7.

of the movement alive. Their principal publication was the journal, *Vestnik Narodnoy Voli* ('Messenger of the People's Will'), edited by P. L. Lavrov and L. A. Tikhomirov. While Lavrov's outlook was reasonably balanced, his colleague advocated crude insurrectionary tactics that were even less realistic now than they had been when first advanced by Tkachev. In 1887 he suddenly recanted his socialist views and returned to Russia under a personal amnesty; in later life he became a vocal propagandist for the autocracy. This sensational defection added to the demoralization in the Populist camp. By the end of the decade the tone was set by the editors of a periodical entitled *Samoupravlenie* ('Self-government'), who recommended a coalition between radicals and moderates on a common democratic platform. As one of them put it: 'In order not to scatter and weaken our forces, which are small enough as it is, let us forget for the time being that we are socialists and . . . bravely, resolutely and unhesitatingly raise the banner of Political Liberty.' He concluded his remarks with a caustic reference to 'our doctrinaire group of Social Democrats, microscopic in numbers, significance and influence', whose views, the writer maintained, had been 'conscientiously translated from the German' and were quite irrelevant to the present situation in Russia.¹

The 'Liberation of Labour' group (*Gruppa 'Osvobozhdenie Truda'*), as the first *émigré* Marxist organization called itself, was certainly microscopic. Within two years of its establishment in 1883 its numerical strength had dwindled from five to three.² Its acknowledged leader was Georgiy V. Plekhanov (1857-1918). The son of an army officer, he studied in St. Petersburg, where he soon came under the spell of Bakunin's ideas. It was as a 'repentant nobleman', conscious of his debt to the people, that he joined the Populist movement, where his intellectual precocity and forceful personality quickly earned him a leading position. In December 1875 he made his political début by addressing a small crowd, consisting mainly of intellectuals, before the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg. It was soon dispersed by the police, but acquired an almost legendary significance among later generations of Russian revolutionaries as the first occasion when they had openly demonstrated their beliefs. Subsequently Plekhanov was active as a propagandist among industrial workers in the capital. In

¹ Cited by D. Koltsov in appx. to A. Thun, *Istoriya revolyutsionnykh dvizheniy v Rossii*, 2nd ed. (Pg., 1920), pp. 251-2.

² See S. H. Baron, 'The first decade of Russian Marxism', in *Amer. Slavic and E. Europ. Rev.* (1955), xiv. 315-30. The personalities of the Marxist leaders are analysed in depth by L. Haimson in *The Russian Marxists and the origins of Bolshevism* (N.Y., 1955); cf. also F. I. Dan, *Proiskhozhdenie bolshevizma* (N.Y., 1946), pp. 187ff., and V. Vaganyan, *G. V. Plekhanov . . .* (M., 1924), pp. 63ff.

1879, objecting to the Populists' steady drift towards terrorism, he broke away and formed a splinter group in opposition to the People's Will party, to which he gave the name 'Black Re-partition' (*Chernyy Peredel*). The choice of title testified to Plekhanov's faith in mass action, but his organization failed to make much impression upon the peasantry. Early in 1880, harassed by the police, he emigrated: he was not to return until 1917. In Paris he came into contact with French socialist leaders and plunged into an earnest study of Marxist literature. This was the formative period of his life. His coldly logical mind was attracted by the imposing monolithic structure of Marx's thought. Gradually he became convinced that only by embracing his teaching unreservedly could Russian revolutionaries meet the crisis besetting their movement. Plekhanov accepted uncritically Marx's materialist conception of history, his dialectical method, and his emphasis on the class struggle as a means of bringing about a revolution by the international proletariat. Like many other European radicals of his day, he regarded Marxism as the last word in the scientific study of society. It was a closed system of ideas that had to be applied to concrete historical circumstances, but which it was superfluous, dangerous, and even slightly wicked to call in question. The laws of social development, Plekhanov believed, had been ascertained once for all. To investigate their validity in an objective spirit was to give aid and comfort to the enemy. Marxism was much more than a science: it was a weapon of struggle. This attitude was of course common to Marx's followers throughout Europe. But Plekhanov added an element of rigidity, of pious veneration for established authority, that was peculiarly his own—or which at least owed much to the traditions of the Russian intelligentsia. To his followers he communicated the sense of belonging to an exclusive and embattled sect, whose mission it was to defend orthodox beliefs against the ever-present temptations of heresy.

Plekhanov's intellectual efforts to come to terms with Marxist doctrine had an emotional intensity such as one finds with a religious convert. He had to wrestle for a long time with his conscience before he could find relief in total identification with his new faith. In 1881, under the impact of the dramatic events in Russia, he expressed guarded support for terrorist methods. He made plans to associate himself with the Populist *émigrés* in a new journalistic venture. But the mood passed. Two years later he wrote a lengthy article, entitled 'Socialism and the Political Struggle', in which he subjected Populist theories to exhaustive, and often offensive, criticism. When the editors of *Vestnik Narodnoy Voli* refused to print it, he parted company with them and set up his own organization. The article was published under its auspices. Tsarist police agents abroad, who kept well abreast of political

manœuvres among the *émigrés*, helped to promote conflict between the two factions.¹

The circumstances in which the breach took place left their imprint upon the subsequent history of Russian Marxism, which passed its infancy in a bitter struggle with the Populists. Plekhanov was a gifted polemical writer, and his critical shafts were barbed with more venom than the circumstances warranted. Lavrov complained that the Marxists seemed more inimical to their socialist rivals than to the autocracy.² In the heat of battle they seemed to lose all sense of proportion and overlooked the fact that they and the Populists were at that time scarcely more than insignificant specks on the horizon of Russian politics.

Plekhanov's chief associate and lifelong friend was Pavel B. Axelrod (1850-1928). As a child—one of several sons of an impoverished Jewish innkeeper—he had known acute suffering and deprivation. He entered Kiev University and was active in the Populist movement both as an organizer and a propagandist. Like Plekhanov, he was at first a follower of Bakunin, but the chief influence upon his thought came from the writings of Ferdinand Lassalle. His approach to Marxism was subtly different from that of his colleague. Whereas Plekhanov was attracted to it primarily as an intellectual system, for Axelrod it was an instrument of liberation, a means of eliminating concrete social evils. He, too, could be uncompromisingly doctrinaire and intolerant, but his devotion to the cause of revolution was tempered with a warm humanity. Plekhanov tended to stand aloof from others, conscious of his intellectual superiority. Axelrod, by contrast, was always ready to help younger men with encouragement or advice. As one who had raised himself up from obscurity by his own efforts, he did not undergo the torments of conscience that beset radicals from privileged backgrounds. Both men were cosmopolitan in outlook. But it was not fortuitous that, whereas Plekhanov chose to settle in Geneva, with its traditions of intellectual dissent, Axelrod made his home in Zurich, where he came into contact with the German labour movement. At this time Bismarck's anti-socialist legislation was still in force, but the *émigré* Social Democrats were beginning to acquire a mass following in their homeland. Their task was in many ways easier than that facing the Russian Marxist leaders, but their problems were not totally dissimilar. For Axelrod, German Social Democracy always remained the ideal. He dreamed of building up in Russia a broad party of the working class which would one day be powerful enough to challenge the whole might of the autocracy.

¹ V. Vaganyan, pp. 73-85; cf. S. H. Baron, 'Plekhanov and the origins of Russian Marxism', in *Russian Review* (1954), xiii. 38-51.

² *Iz arkhiva P. B. Aksel'roda* (Berlin, 1924), p. 37.

Axelrod was content to devote himself in the main to questions of organization and tactics, deferring to Plekhanov on matters of basic doctrine. The third member of the group, Vera I. Zasulich (1851-1919), had few qualifications as a leader other than exemplary moral integrity and passionate idealism. Internationally she was the best-known figure among them. The daughter of a prominent nobleman, in January 1878 she had shot and seriously wounded General Trepov, military governor of St. Petersburg—a deed that gave the signal for a wave of terrorist attacks. Among Russian socialists, regardless of faction, she was held in high honour. To the Liberation of Labour group she was useful mainly as a figure-head, buttressing their claim to be the heirs to the best in the Populist tradition. Of the other two foundation members of the organization, one died at an early age and the other, L. G. Deych, was betrayed to the police: early in 1884 he was arrested while on German soil, extradited to Russia, and condemned to thirteen years hard labour in Siberia. His loss was a severe blow to the group, since he was the only man of action among its members. He had undertaken the task of maintaining contact with the few Marxist organizations that existed in Russia at this time. For many years thereafter the *émigrés* were almost wholly isolated from events in their homeland. They were obliged to restrict their propagandist efforts to the Russian communities scattered across Western Europe, which—fortunately for them—included a fair number of impressionable students. Even within this narrow field they met with limited success, for their dogmatic self-righteous attitude repelled those who sought to rally the left behind a practicable programme.

Plekhanov and his associates were not unduly worried by their isolation. They saw themselves less as leaders of an active revolutionary movement than as an ideological spearhead. Their task was to fashion the theoretical concepts that would guide the Russian Social-Democratic Party once this came into being.

It was no easy task to apply Marxist doctrine to Russian conditions. Too much adaptation would lead to opportunistic distortion, too little to rigid sectarianism. Marx's teachings were not unfamiliar in Russia. Some Populists, notably Lavrov, accounted themselves his disciples, and Plekhanov's claim to be the sole authoritative exponent of 'scientific socialism' did not go unchallenged. His critics argued that he over-emphasized the deterministic elements in Marx, and that his views were symptomatic of the present mood of defeatism and disenchantment. The position of Karl Marx himself in this dispute was somewhat ambiguous. By the late 1870's his earlier deep suspicion of Russian revolutionaries as disruptive Bakuninists had given way to uncritical

enthusiasm. On several occasions he expressed admiration for the terrorists of the People's Will. He was also prepared to make far-reaching concessions to the Populists in the theoretical field. Writing to N. K. Mikhaylovsky in 1877, he declared that 'if Russia continues to travel along the road she has chosen since 1861, she will miss one of the best chances ever given to a people to avoid all the peripetia of the capitalist system'. It was no coincidence that this statement was first published, not by the Liberation of Labour group, but by Lavrov's *Vestnik Narodnoy Voli*.¹ Still more favourable to the Populist viewpoint was Marx's now well-known reply four years later to an anxious inquiry by Zasulich as to the future prospects of the *obshchina*, in which he stated that 'the commune is the *point d'appui* of social regeneration in Russia'.² In a rough draft of this letter he said that it might be able 'to appropriate the fruits of capitalist production without submitting to its *modus operandi*'³—which seemed to concede the Populists all they could have wished.

Friedrich Engels was less enamoured of the Populists, but he received coolly Plekhanov's major critique of their ideas, *Our Differences*: what Russia needed, he remarked privately in 1885, was 'not a programme but a revolution'.⁴ Apparently he had in mind a terrorist *coup*, for in the same year he observed to Zasulich that, if ever Blanqui's doctrines had a chance of success, it was in Russia at the present time.⁵ The failure of the Populists' prognostications to materialize, coupled with growing respect for Plekhanov's stature as a theorist, eventually led him to regard the latter's ideas in a more positive light. But both Marx and Engels always looked at Russian affairs through Western European eyes. They were interested in a Russian revolution only in so far as this might give the signal for the outbreak of the proletarian uprising in the advanced countries that it was their lifelong ambition to bring about. They had little confidence in the ability of Russian workers to carry out a revolution of their own, whereas this assumption was the very cornerstone of Plekhanov's theoretical edifice. His principal contribution to the history of political ideas in Russia was to introduce the concept of the Russian proletariat.

In Plekhanov's thinking the proletariat was something more than the sum total of real men and women employed in Russian industry. Seldom in his voluminous writings did he pause to analyse the actual physical characteristics—i.e. the geographical distribution, social

¹ Vol. v (Geneva, 1886), p. 216. ² *Iz arkhiva P. B. Aksel'roda*, p. 15.

³ *Arkhiv K. Marksa i F. Engel'sa*, ed. D. Ryazanov (Lg., 1924-5), i. 274.

⁴ *Die Briefe von F. Engels an E. Bernstein*, ed. K. Mandelbaum (Berlin, 1925), pp. 172-3.

⁵ *Gruppa 'Osvobozhdenie Truda': iz arkhivov G. V. Plekhanova, V. I. Zasulichy i L. G. Deycha* (M.-Lg., 1924-6), iii. 26-27.

composition and psychological attitudes—of the class in which he so resolutely placed his trust. His approach was as much emotional as rational. Years later he was to recall that he and his colleagues had ‘impatiently awaited for the proletariat to appear on the stage of history like a promised Messiah’.¹ It was an intellectual abstraction—one might say, the algebraic expression that enabled him to complete his revolutionary equation. His argument was that the proletariat was an inevitable concomitant of capitalism, and that this socio-economic system was now taking gigantic strides forward in Russia. The Populists should have the courage to admit that ‘whatever the coming socialist revolution in the West may augur for us, the question of the day is capitalist production’.² It was an illusion to think that by a bold stroke one could halt its onward march and achieve socialism by a specifically Russian road. The laws of historical development were universally valid, and it was impossible to leap over natural stages of evolution—least of all by relying on the *muzhik*. For capitalism was penetrating even into the Russian village, encouraging production for the market and differentiating the peasantry into antagonistic ‘petty bourgeois’ and ‘proletarian’ segments. The commune, far from being an instrument of social justice, had become a means whereby the richer peasants exploited the poor. If the Populists should, in defiance of nature, succeed in seizing power, and then try to preserve the commune artificially, they would merely play into the hands of this wealthy group: such a step would in fact only lead to capitalism, not socialism. The revolutionary government would find itself faced with strong opposition from an *embourgeoisé* peasantry and would be overthrown for lack of popular support.

Nevertheless, Plekhanov went on, there was no cause for despair. The industrial working class, once awakened to a consciousness of its historical mission, would help to overthrow both capitalism and all relics of ‘feudal’ (i.e. pre-capitalist) society. It had most to lose from the existing order and would be the first to rise up against it. As he declared in his address to the inaugural congress of the Second International in 1889: ‘The Russian revolution will either succeed as a workers’ revolution or it will not succeed at all; there is not and cannot be any other way.’³ Some of his listeners must have smiled politely in disbelief, recalling the infinitesimal size of the working class in Russia. Plekhanov’s case was that it could make up for its numerical weakness by a relatively high degree of political awareness. The experience of the past decade had shown that industrial workers

¹ G. V. Plekhanov, *Sochineniya*, ed. D. Ryazanov (M.-Lg., 1923–6) [hereafter cited as *Plekhanov*], xv. 90.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 231.

³ *Ibid.*, iv. 54.

responded to revolutionary propaganda much more readily than peasants.

In moments of great enthusiasm Plekhanov sometimes gave the impression of expecting the proletariat to engage the defenders of absolutism in single combat, but as a matter of principle he assumed that they would have the support of other sections of society. In his earlier writings, still mindful of his Populist antecedents, he held optimistically that the peasant masses could be brought to follow the workers' lead. The first draft programme published by his group, in 1884, allowed for 'the eventuality that an independent revolutionary movement might emerge among the peasants'. But the second draft, which appeared three years later, noted with evident chagrin that 'the revolutionary movement finds in the peasantry almost no support, sympathy or understanding'.¹ When the countryside remained politically passive even under the impact of the catastrophic famine of 1891-2, Plekhanov's regard for the peasant sank still further. 'The proletariat and the *muzhik* are real political antipodes', he wrote. 'The historical role of the proletariat is as revolutionary as that of the *muzhik* is conservative. It was upon the peasant that Oriental despotisms sustained themselves unchanged for thousands of years. In a comparatively short time the proletariat has shaken the whole foundation of Western European society. And in Russia its development and political education is progressing incomparably more rapidly than it did in the West.'² He was thus coming close to the view, common among Western socialists at the time, that the peasant was simply 'the least brutal animal in the farmyard', to use Marx's caustic phrase. While Plekhanov considered it probable that in the distant future the poorer peasants would support the workers in their struggle for socialism, he dismissed as unrealistic any notion of immediate action to rally the peasantry as a whole to the workers' side under a common democratic banner. His eyes were fixed firmly upon the cities. Events were to show that the Russian Marxists seriously misjudged the trend of development in the countryside. Their apparent indifference to the revolutionary potentialities of the hungry peasant millions was to give plentiful ammunition to others less dogmatic, within their own ranks as well as in the Populist camp.

As their faith in the peasants waned, they came to lay more emphasis upon the support which the workers could expect to receive from the urban middle class. Plekhanov explicitly rejected the Populists' prejudiced view of the bourgeoisie as inherently reactionary. A government incapable of assuring proper conditions for trade and industry to develop, and which obstructed even the most innocuous activities of

¹ Ibid., ii. 362, 402.

² Ibid., iii. 382-3.

rural *zemstva* or professional associations, would be bound to arouse the opposition of middle-class opinion. Even if one put the worst construction on their motives, bankers and industrialists would come to insist on political concessions once they saw that the absolutist régime could no longer preserve order in the face of rising popular demands. This analysis was based upon the Marxist precept that changes in the economic basis of society must inevitably be followed, sooner or later, by appropriate changes in the political and ideological superstructure. Russia had now become a capitalist country, but its state organization remained 'feudal', and the bourgeoisie did not as yet wield the political power it had won in Western Europe. It would be driven to liberalism by the logic of its class interests.

The corollary of this was that the forthcoming revolution in Russia would be what the Marxists termed 'bourgeois-democratic'. The Populists thought in terms of replacing absolutism by some kind of socialist or semi-socialist régime. Their critics propounded the idea of a revolution in two stages. In the first Russia would be transformed into a modern European country. All remnants of 'feudal' economic conditions would be eliminated, and industrial output greatly expanded; the autocracy would give way to a democratic republican order, in which all citizens would enjoy full political liberties and civil rights; and in the social sphere essential reforms would be carried out. In the second stage, that of socialist revolution, the means of production, distribution, and exchange would be nationalized, and the political system would be one of proletarian dictatorship. On the latter point Plekhanov was quite emphatic. He claimed, following Marx, that it implied no more than the rule of the vast majority of the population over a tiny minority of 'exploiters'—'panarchy' was the term he used to describe it. But through what organs were the masses to exercise their dictatorship? What safeguards would exist against abuses of power, and what methods were to be permitted in coercing opponents? To these and other obvious questions Plekhanov deliberately closed his eyes. There is no reason to doubt his sincerity when he carefully elucidated, for the benefit of his working-class readers, the merits of the various reforms which the bourgeois-democratic revolution would bring. Doubtless he assumed that these blessings would be preserved in one form or another once socialism had been achieved. But he failed to make his attitude clear; and his evasive silence encouraged his followers to take the view that democracy, freedom, and the rule of law were simply part of the paraphernalia of middle-class rule, to be dispensed with according to the dictates of expediency. They came to regard the first stage of the revolution merely as a stepping-stone to the second, without any absolute value in itself. They could quote Plekhanov in support:

‘Economic liberation is our great end’, he had written, ‘to which every political movement is a subordinate means.’¹

There was much here that was reminiscent of Populism. Moreover, Plekhanov was inconsistent in his opinions as regards the chronology of revolution. On one hand, his theory implied a lengthy interval between the two phases, if only to enable Russian workers to become sufficiently class-conscious. This required them to engage in prolonged open struggle against their employers (a school of political education denied them under the absolutist régime) and to endure the miseries which Marx deemed inseparable from the process of capitalist accumulation. It was for this reason that Plekhanov shocked the Populists by declaring frankly that he did not believe it possible for socialism to be attained in Russia in the near future, and warned that any effort to combine the two revolutions would merely delay the achievement of both.² But in apparent contradiction he went on to extend the hope that ‘our capitalism will fade away before it has had time to blossom completely’.³ Such an eventuality, he maintained, might come about from either of two causes. The first, recognized by Marx as well, was that in the meantime a proletarian revolution might break out in the West, thereby greatly accelerating the pace of social change in Russia. The second—and here Plekhanov struck out on his own—was internal in character rather than international: the relative weakness of the middle class in Russia. If the German burghers had been late in appearing on the political scene, by comparison with those of England and France, then had not their Russian counterparts made their début later still? Similarly, were not Russian workers likely to be more advanced politically than their Western cousins had been at a corresponding stage, since they could learn from their example? There was thus no reason for gloomy prognostications about the duration of capitalist rule in Russia. Although it was true that an historical epoch could not be avoided, its length could at least be curtailed. Everything depended upon the degree to which the workers showed themselves capable of resolute action.

Plekhanov was caught in a conflict between his head and his heart. Reason taught him that the Russian workers still had far to go before they could draw level with those of the West in numbers or experience; emotion demanded some assurance that the promised land of socialism might after all be not so far away. His Populist critics seized upon the

¹ Ibid., ii. 346. The extent of Plekhanov’s responsibility for the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ as established by the Bolsheviks in 1917 is discussed by N. Valentinov, ‘Tragediya G. V. Plekhanova’, in *Novyy zhurnal* (1948), xx. 270–93.

² Ibid., ii. 76, 286.

³ Ibid., ii. 337.

flaw in his revolutionary strategy: if the Russian middle class were so feeble, how could the coming revolution be branded as bourgeois?

In attempting to answer this conundrum the Marxists were forced into complex intellectual contortions. The final product was the theory, first expounded in detail by Axelrod in the late 1890's, that the proletariat should exercise 'hegemony' (as distinct from dictatorship) during the first phase of revolution.¹

He argued that the Russian Social Democrats faced a tactical problem far more complex than that confronting their comrades in the West. The latter had merely to lead the workers against the bourgeois order, whereas in Russia the workers were simultaneously opposed to the bourgeoisie and allied to it in a common struggle against the absolutist régime. They had to fight on two fronts: to combine two tasks, 'socialist' and 'general democratic', neither of which they could afford to neglect in pursuit of the other. If they failed to resist the natural tendency to concentrate exclusively on their 'socialist task', i.e. to foster the struggle against their employers, the broader task of winning liberty would be left to the moderates, with the result that the gains of the democratic revolution would be tailored to suit middle-class appetites. Moreover, one-sided furtherance of the workers' economic interests would antagonize the liberals, driving a wedge between the two wings of the democratic alliance and imperilling its chances of success. On the other hand, Axelrod continued, it would be equally short-sighted to encourage the workers to concentrate exclusively upon their 'general democratic task', since this would simply mean that they would pull the chestnuts out of the fire on behalf of the middle class. If the Party played down its socialist slogans for fear of intimidating the moderates, it would be guilty of betraying the interests of its working-class supporters, thereby also weakening the common front. The only way out of the dilemma was for the Party to preserve its independent existence and seek to mobilize the masses under its own leadership. When it had attained a position of strength it could fearlessly face the temporary partnership with the liberals which Russia's backwardness necessitated, and force its allies to accept its hegemony. The prospect that opened up was thus an enticing one: the Social Democrats, few in number though they were at the present time, could direct the entire nation in its struggle against the autocracy. As one of Axelrod's colleagues wrote: 'The working class can attract to its side all classes of people except those living directly by exploiting the workers. Not very many of them will join the workers' party, but as time goes on all of them will come to

¹ P. B. Axelrod, *K voprosu o sovremennykh zadachakh i taktike russkikh sotsial-demokratov* and *Istoricheskoye polozhenie i vzaimnoye otnoshenie liberal'noy i sotsialisticheskoy demokratii v Rossii* (Geneva, 1898).

regard it not merely as their ally but as their leader.¹ A later age would call this the strategy of the Popular Front.

It was doubtful whether the two tasks posed by Axelrod were really reconcilable. Certainly his scheme took little account of political or psychological realities. It expected the proletariat to perform a highly complicated manœuvre: to support the bourgeoisie in so far as its activities were directed against absolutism, while simultaneously opposing it in so far as they were directed against itself. It was only natural that those to whom the Social Democrats addressed their propaganda should respond to its emphatic anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois note, disregarding abstract intellectual refinements. The theorists assumed that at the climax of the revolution, when the workers would be at the zenith of their power, with the rest of Russian society hearkening to their will, they would bear in mind that the logic of history required them to adopt a policy of restraint, and not to press for more concessions than were compatible with the maintenance of a bourgeois régime. Was it not more likely that their leaders, carried forward on a wave of popular turbulence, would proceed from hegemony to dictatorship, and that in so doing they would extinguish the precarious independence of their reluctant allies?

A great deal of obscurity surrounded the question of the criteria to be applied in assessing the proletariat's maturity for socialism. How much importance was to be attached to cultural factors? Axelrod in particular seemed ready to recognize that the gulf between the Russian worker and his Western colleague could not be bridged overnight; and that for this reason, if for no other, Russia needed to pass through a prolonged period of capitalist development. Yet both he and Plekhanov held strictly to the classical Marxist thesis of the ever-increasing impoverishment of the masses under capitalism, which presupposed that no real improvement in their material or cultural level could take place. In practice the natural tendency among Russian Marxists was to equate maturity with a high degree of militant political activism. As convinced 'Westernizers', they were prone to underestimate the idiosyncrasies of Russia's situation and to emphasize parallels and points of contact with the West. For the same reason they assumed that 'capitalism' in Russia would take a form closely resembling that attributed to it in Western Europe. This was a large assumption indeed. In fact Marxism, particularly in Plekhanov's rigid interpretation, was a far from sufficiently sensitive instrument for analysing historical trends in an emergent society.

On a more limited plane, the theory was seriously deficient as regards the structure and organization of the revolutionary party. While this

¹ D. Koltsov, in *Rabotnik* (Geneva, 1899), no. 5-6, pp. 146-7.

was ostensibly to be a democratic body, the pioneers of Russian Marxism tended to stress the role that would be played in it by intellectuals—so long, at least, as it was obliged to operate under clandestine conditions. But could a party so constituted adequately fulfil its purpose? Or would the circumstances of its origin condition its character? Axelrod was capable of writing that the intelligentsia, ‘as the best educated and most developed part of the nation, is its natural leader’—apparently quite oblivious of the implications of this casual remark. On another occasion he persuaded Plekhanov to moderate the tone of an article which he had written, inquiring anxiously: ‘Is it not still too early to arouse among our workers a wholesale antagonism towards the intelligentsia as such?’¹ He seemed to assume that the intellectuals were motivated by a pure idealism, remote from any base concern for power, and that they would willingly forgo their positions of authority within the Party as soon as there appeared an *élite* of workers able to take over the functions of leadership.

In the theories developed by the Liberation of Labour group there was much that was vague and contradictory; much that was unrealistic or downright utopian; and much that had ominous authoritarian connotations. But these defects did not detract from their appeal. In the fifteen years that followed his breach with the Populists in 1883, Plekhanov and his colleagues succeeded in building up a system of doctrine and belief—one is tempted to say, a political mythology—which had enough semblance of plausibility to spur a whole generation of young Russians to heroic endeavours.

¹ P. B. Axelrod, *Rabocheye dvizhenie i sotsial-demokratiya* (Geneva, 1885), p. 10; *Perepiska G. V. Plekhanova i P. B. Aksel'roda*, ed. P. A. Berlin and others [hereafter cited as *Perepiska*], (Moscow, 1925), i. 125.

II

THE FIRST HERESIES

IN 1891 and 1892 large areas of European Russia were afflicted by famine—the most disastrous within living memory. In its wake came a serious epidemic of cholera. Hunger and disease claimed nearly half a million lives.

The catastrophe awakened Russian society from its torpor and inaugurated a period of vigorous political experiment, which was to reach its climax in 1905. The Government modified the rigours of its agrarian policy. The appointment of Witte as Minister of Finance gave a fresh impetus to the industrialization drive launched in the late 1880's. The policy with which he came to be identified was a far-sighted one. In the long term it offered the only possibility of absorbing the surplus rural population, and so of raising living standards. But its immediate effect was to cause a good deal of social and economic dislocation, and it found little favour with the public opinion of the day. Conservatives complained of the damage done to agrarian interests; radicals called for reforms that would cure the symptoms of peasant impoverishment.

In St. Petersburg and elsewhere intellectuals plunged with renewed ardour into the old discussion of Russia's destiny. 'A whole generation', a contemporary later recalled, '... threw itself into the study of political theory and the economic, social and cultural history of Russia and other lands. "Surplus value", "the theory of markets", "the differentiation of the peasantry" and other questions were debated for nights on end.'¹ A number of men prominent in the public eye covertly sympathized with the radicals. Count P. A. Heyden, chairman of the august Imperial Free Economic Society, allowed them the use of its debating chamber. One of the discussions there went on for several days and aroused a great deal of heat in academic circles as well as among student youth.² The ferment spread to provincial towns, where the small colonies of banished political suspects set the tone of intellectual life. The 'third element' of *zemstvo* employees reacted sharply to the new wind blowing from the capital. In 1894 some of them attempted to form a political organization, the Party of the People's Rights, with a moderate programme of constitutional democracy and social reform, but it was at

¹ F. I. Dan, *Proiskhozhdenie bol'shevizma* (N.Y., 1946), p. 219.

² A. A. Kizevetter, *Na rubezhe dvukh stoletiy* (Prague, 1929), p. 215.

once broken up by the police. Its disappearance helped to promote the general drift towards extremism. More successful were attempts to propagate 'advanced' political views behind the façade of cultural organizations. The most important of these was the 'Literacy Committee', designed to promote adult education. It had headquarters in St. Petersburg and Moscow and branches in many provincial towns. The sudden boom in its activities was halted in November 1895, when it was brought under stricter official control. Professional associations, too, often gave scope for under-cover political activity. At the annual conference of the Pirogov medical society in 1896 doctors in the *zemstvo* service made speeches highly critical of the Government, which were afforded extensive publicity. The censors of the 1890's were relatively liberal. They allowed Russian radicals their traditional intellectual stimulus: the 'solid journals' (*tolstye zhurnaly*), which succeeded in maintaining remarkably high standards. In articles on philosophy, aesthetics, sociology, economic theory, or similar topics it was often possible to express views that were clearly revolutionary in intent, so long as they were couched in sufficiently abstruse jargon. This 'Aesopian language', as its practitioners called it, was readily understood by initiates. One of its incidental consequences was to leave a lasting mark upon the literary style of Russian radical writers, who often affected a ponderous obscurity even when there was no longer any need for concealment.

The great debate ranged the intelligentsia into two camps: Populists and Marxists. The former were led by a trio of rather undistinguished writers, V. P. Vorontsov, N. F. Danielson, and S. N. Yuzhakov, while the widely-respected Mikhaylovsky occupied a position of Olympian detachment in their rear.¹ They were agreed in blaming the present ills of Russian society upon 'capitalism'—by which they understood modern industrialism in all its manifold aspects. Though they now conceded that capitalism had penetrated irrevocably into the Russian countryside, they continued to believe that such peasant institutions as the commune and the craft co-operative (*artel'*) were worthy of preservation. They argued that village industries, if assisted in introducing up-to-date techniques, could hold their own against competition from the factories. Large-scale industry, such as the Government was now promoting, was in the Populist view the product of an unholy alliance between foreign capital and the bureaucratic State, an artificial and

¹ T. von Laue, 'The fate of capitalism in Russia: the narodnik version', in *Amer. Slavic and E. Europ. Rev.* (1954), xiii. 11-28; S. H. Baron, 'Legal Marxism and the fate of capitalism in Russia', in *ibid.* (1957), xvi. 113-26. Cf. also S. M. Schwarz, 'Populism and early Marxism . . .', in *Continuity and change in Russian and Soviet thought*, ed. J. Simmons (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), pp. 40-62.

alien growth on the Russian economy. Its prospects of development, they held, were poor: the peasants could not afford factory-made goods, while the possibilities of export were limited by the difficulties of competing with cheap goods from more advanced countries. When critics pointed out that this cautious policy seemingly condemned Russia to economic stagnation and a position of permanent inferiority *vis-à-vis* the West, Yuzhakov replied with arguments drawn from the Marxist arsenal. The industrialized West, plagued by economic rivalries and class conflicts, was heading for war and revolution. As a non-capitalist power Russia could stand aside; once friendly socialist states were established on her borders, she would be able to proceed with the establishment of a new society based upon the egalitarian principles of the commune. A peaceful and gradual approach to socialism on these lines, it was implied, would have much to commend it even in Western eyes.

In this perspective there was clearly a good deal of wishful thinking. The Populists had a disconcertingly cavalier attitude to statistical material and tended to present their speculative prophecies as though their fulfilment were in some way guaranteed: in this, paradoxically, they were influenced by Marxist determinism. Yet on the whole they remained more flexible than their adversaries, and there were many points in their analysis that deserved respect. They were justified, for instance, in minimizing the extent of social differentiation among the peasantry and in stressing the importance to the economy of small-scale industry. They also paid due regard to Russia's idiosyncrasies as a less developed country. Nevertheless they could not offer a realistic alternative to orthodox economic policy, since they remained too firmly wedded to the traditional ideals and prejudices of the Russian intelligentsia.

Among the Marxists in St. Petersburg the best-known figures were the economist M. I. Tugan-Baranovsky and Petr B. Struve (1870–1944), subsequently a pioneer of Russian liberalism.¹ Struve became a Marxist at the age of 18, chiefly because it appeared to offer a solution to the problems of Russia's 'historical path'. He did not, like most of his contemporaries, become emotionally committed to it as a revolutionary creed. A gifted and versatile writer, who also had a considerable talent for organization, he remained a puzzling figure to his fellow-Marxists. His untypical readiness to modify his views when they seemed to him no longer relevant made him a constant focus of controversy.

¹ R. Kindersley, *The first Russian Revisionists: a study of 'Legal Marxism' in Russia* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 29ff.; G. Fischer, *Russian liberalism: from gentry to intelligentsia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 96ff.; B. I. Nikolaevsky, 'P. B. Struve, 1870–1944', in *Novyy zhurnal* (N.Y., 1945), no. 10, pp. 306–28.

In September 1894 Struve published the first major Marxist contribution to the debate, a work entitled *Critical Notes on Russia's Economic Development*. In this he boldly challenged the principal canon of Populist doctrine by declaring that the peasants' misery was due less to capitalism than to the lack of it—to the rapid growth of population and adherence to archaic methods of farming, which made it difficult for the peasants to adapt themselves to production for the market. 'Technical backwardness, not capitalism, is the enemy that is taking away the peasant's daily bread.'¹ Russia's greatest need was to increase agricultural productivity, and this required the development of large-scale industry. He pointed out that the term 'capitalism', which the Populists employed so loosely, was really applicable only to the more advanced stages of a market economy, which Russia had not as yet reached. As the new system gained a firm hold it would overcome its initial growing pains. Production would expand and the labour force become more diversified. Economic progress would bring social and political changes in its train. There were no grounds for pessimism as to the extent of the demand for factory-made goods, since Russian industry was a natural organic phenomenon, not a hot-house plant.

Thus, for Struve, capitalism was both desirable and inevitable. He recognized that in the course of this economic advance some peasants were losing their traditional means of livelihood. But the future lay with the 'strong peasant' who farmed his land in a rational progressive manner. In the long run Russia could become another United States, prosperous and self-sufficient, with her industry and agriculture in easy equilibrium. The realization of this vision was impeded by her heritage of backwardness. For this reason, he concluded, 'let us recognize our lack of culture and go to learn from capitalism'.²

The remark was deliberately intended to be provocative. Its echoes reverberated for years among Marxists and Populists alike. It stirred the veteran Mikhaylovsky into fervent denunciation of the Marxist attitude as contrary to truth and justice. He asserted that they were blind to the human consequences of the progress they so eagerly welcomed, and instead of sympathizing with expropriated peasants or suffering proletarians regarded them simply as necessary victims of the impersonal march of history. In this respect they were no different from liberals or conservatives who were ready to sacrifice the interests of real people to the advantage of that abstract entity, the nation. All attempts to subject society to the workings of supposedly scientific and inevitable laws were dangerous to the liberty of the individual—the

¹ P. B. Struve, *Kriticheskiye zametki k voprosu ob ekonomicheskom razvitii Rossii* (Spb., 1894), p. 224.

² *Ibid.*, p. 288.

irreducible element on which all progress depended. To the Marxist the individual had no significance other than as a member of a group; and this was why Struve could dismiss the intelligentsia as '*un quantité négligeable*'. To Mikhaylovsky, who composed his articles with a bust of Belinsky on his desk, freedom of the individual was the cardinal value: 'the human personality, its fortunes, its interests . . . should stand at the centre of our theoretical notions and our practical activity.'¹ Not even the most exalted goals justified abandonment of this principle. The essence of socialism, he maintained, was the emancipation of the individual; and it could come about only through the actions of individuals who sought, of their own free will, to implement certain subjectively-held ideals—not, as Marxists thought, through some mechanical process. The Marxist felt bound to subordinate himself to 'history': he refused to exercise his natural freedom of will; he suspended his moral faculties, on the grounds that questions of morality were irrelevant, and that an action was good where it coincided with the objective logic of events. In the last resort historical determinism led to an inability to distinguish between right and wrong, to a readiness to tolerate injustice wherever it might prove expedient.²

Mikhaylovsky's thunderous salvoes extended the range of the dispute, but did not have the annihilating effect that might have been expected. At the end of 1894 the Marxists in St. Petersburg carried out a major *coup* with the publication of a work bearing the clumsy title *On the Question of the Monist View of History*.³ The author, who used a pseudonym, was none other than Plekhanov. The censor had cause to regret his error: the first edition was sold out within three weeks, and for some time the work served Russian radicals as a standard textbook. It was a skilful popular exposition of the precepts of Marxist dialectical and historical materialism—the first occasion that these doctrines had been set before the general Russian public. Plekhanov dismissed Mikhaylovsky as reactionary and utopian. He had derived his views from French ethical socialists whose views had long ago been shown by Marx to be unscientific. The moral issue was simply a red herring: the individual could hope to realize his subjective ideals only by aligning himself with a progressive social class, and those who exalted the role

¹ Cited by R. V. Ivanov-Razumnik, *Istoriya russkoy obshchestvennoy mysl'i*, 4th ed. (Spb., 1914), ii. 133.

² J. H. Billington, *Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 162ff.; A. P. Mendel, 'N. K. Mikhailovsky and his criticism of Russian Marxism' in *Amer. Slavic and E. Europ. Rev.* (1955), xiv. 331-45, and *Dilemmas of progress in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), ch. I.

³ *Plekhanov*, vii. 61-326; translated by A. Rothstein, *In defence of materialism* (L., 1947). On the circumstances of its publication, see Plekhanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9; Yu. O. Martov, *Zapiski sotsial-demokrata* (Berlin—Pg.—M., 1922), p. 243.

of individual 'heroes' above that of the 'crowd' were condemning themselves to futility. It was wrong to suppose that Marxists were fatalists who denied the existence of free will. Although history was unfolding in accordance with certain objective laws, only the final ends of the process, not the speed of its movement, were predetermined; and the individual had ample freedom to choose whether to hasten or delay its implementation. True freedom lay in a recognition of the limitations imposed by external circumstance.

Mikhaylovsky's most telling points were side-stepped, but it was Plekhanov who won the day. The reasons for this were partly historical, partly psychological. The development of the labour movement in Russia at this time naturally encouraged optimism among intellectuals as to the revolutionary potentialities of the proletariat. It suggested that the Marxists understood better than their rivals the motive forces at work in society. This view was powerfully reinforced by observation of economic trends in Russia at this time. Similarly, the growing power of labour in the West could be taken by men who lacked close acquaintance with European conditions as evidence that Marx's predictions were being fulfilled. But the reactions of Russian intellectuals were as much instinctive as rational. Their desire for radical change was tempered by frustration at their own apparent weakness. Plekhanov held out to them the promise that the victory of socialism was inevitable and showed them how they could contribute towards it. He breathed an intoxicating air of self-confidence. The symmetrical completeness of the Marxist world-view, its 'monism', had a powerful fascination for those who sought a single comprehensive answer to the complex problems that faced them. Mikhaylovsky himself acidly acknowledged this cause of its appeal: 'For those who do not want to think, everything has already been thought out, has been chewed and put in their mouths—all that remains for them is to swallow.'¹ Another factor was that Marxism was a Western European doctrine; and this was a moment when Russian intellectuals were particularly conscious of the backwardness of their country in relation to the West. More important still was the Marxists' claim to have devised the only theory of society that was truly scientific. The prestige of science stood unimpaired, and there seemed no limit to the benefits it could confer upon mankind—by application to society as well as to the natural world. Mikhaylovsky's argument that historical materialism was based upon Hegelian philosophy rather than empirical study of the evidence, and therefore did not deserve to be regarded as scientific at all, failed to carry conviction.

To contemporaries it seemed that the Marxists had won an unqualified triumph. Symptomatic of their success was the influence which

¹ Cited by A. P. Mendel, 'N.K. Mikhailovsky . . .', p. 340.

they came to exert upon moderate liberal opinion. Editors of journals critical of the régime found space for articles by Marxist writers, and a few periodicals appeared that openly propagated their ideas. In the winter of 1896-7 a group of Marxists at Samara led by P. P. Maslov obtained control of a local newspaper, *Samarskiy Vestnik* ('The Samara Courier'), which published contributions by Struve and several of his colleagues. Shortly afterwards a successful monthly review, *Novoye Slovo* ('New Word'), appeared in St. Petersburg under Struve's effective editorship. A number of individuals in influential positions, particularly in the cultural field, developed Marxist sympathies. They were soon to prove an invaluable asset to the clandestine Social-Democratic Party. In some ways this was perhaps the most important result of the debate.

By the end of the decade, as a leading Populist recalled later, 'the Marxists undoubtedly "possessed the thoughts" of the younger generation, and all attempts to swim against the current generally ended in utter failure'.¹ In perspective, however, their success was less absolute than it seemed at the time. A new generation of Populists was coming to the fore, in many respects more formidable than the old. It included men of an independent turn of mind capable of challenging the Marxists on the practical as well as on the intellectual plane.

The great debate with the Populists led to a conflict within the Marxist camp. In the foreword to his *Critical Notes* Struve declared frankly that he 'had not been infected by orthodoxy' and '[did] not consider himself bound in the slightest by the letter and code of any doctrine'. He spoke of historical materialism as 'biased' and criticized Engels' views on the origin and nature of the State.² Many years later he said that already at that juncture he had been a liberal at heart, and that he saw socialism mainly as a means of winning political freedom.³ This was undoubtedly an exaggeration; nevertheless the whole tone of his book showed that he regarded the penetration of capitalism into Russia, if not with enthusiasm, at least with equanimity. He was convinced that the immediate hardships involved would be outweighed by the positive advantages that would ultimately result. Although he loyally inserted a vague reference to the inevitability of proletarian revolution, it was clear that he looked forward to this prospect with less relish than the *émigré* leaders.

Always on the alert against the possibility of heresy, Plekhanov

¹ V. M. Chernov, *Zapiski sotsialista-revolutsionera* (Berlin-Pg.-M., 1922), p. 275.

² P. B. Struve, *Kriticheskiye zametki* . . . , pp. ix, 46, 52-53.

³ P. B. Struve, 'My contacts and conflicts with Lenin', in *Slav. and E. Europ. Rev.* (1933-4), xii. 584.

prepared to administer him a rebuke, but was persuaded by A. N. Potresov to hold his fire in the interests of unity.¹ Since Potresov was about to publish Plekhanov's own major work, in which he was to set forth the orthodox viewpoint, the decision to keep silent was understandable. But it subsequently gave his adversaries the chance to accuse him of having secretly sympathized with Struve's 'opportunism'. The cudgel which he discarded was wielded energetically by a young man who was to play a fateful role in shaping the destinies of Russian Marxism: Lenin.

Vladimir I. Ulyanov (1870-1924: it was some years before he took the pseudonym under which he achieved fame) was a contemporary of Struve, but adopted Marxism under different circumstances and with different motives in mind. It was for him a means of systematizing the intense emotions that already held him in thrall: his fanatical devotion to the cause of revolution and his burning hatred of all who stood in its way. The first influences in his life were not Marxist.² There seems little doubt that the execution of his brother, Alexander Ulyanov, in 1887 played a major part in launching him upon his revolutionary career. Later that year he developed a fervent admiration for Chernyshevsky which he was to retain throughout his life. In 1891 he made the acquaintance of M. I. Yaseneva, a protagonist of the Jacobin tendency in Russian Populism represented by Tkachev. Lenin discussed with her the question of the seizure of power by a conspiratorial group, and it has been suggested that she may have exerted some influence upon the formation of his views. Whether this is so or not, he certainly seems to have harboured a strong half-conscious urge to exercise power. Everything was subordinated to the achievement of this aim, which he identified with the victory of the revolution. He never doubted his qualifications for leadership; he did indeed have a considerable gift for inspiring respect and loyalty among his entourage, although his insistence on his own pre-eminence frequently alienated him from his colleagues. Instinctively he divided people into two categories: those who accepted his authority and those who did not. Against the latter he waged a relentless struggle, a series of campaigns planned with cold unsentimental logic. His ability to assess the hard realities of power stood him in good stead as a politician. He recognized the importance

¹ A. N. Potresov and B. I. Nikolaevsky, *Sotsial-demokraticheskoye dvizhenie v Rossii: materialy* (M.-Lg., 1928), pp. 356-7.

² N. Valentinov, *Vstrechi s Leninyim* (N.Y., 1953), pp. 102ff.; *ibid.*, 'Vstrecha Lenina s marksizmom', in *Novyy zhurnal* (1958), no. 53, pp. 189-208. Cf. D. Shub, *Lenin* (N.Y., 1951), pp. 27ff.; B. D. Wolfe, *Three who made a revolution* (N.Y., 1948), pp. 94ff.; L. Haimson, *The Russian Marxists and the origins of Bolshevism* (N.Y., 1955), pp. 109ff.; P. Scheibert, 'Über Lenins Anfänge', in *Historische Zeitschrift* (1956), clxxxii. 549-66.

of bringing force to bear at an adversary's weakest point. He perceived at once when changed circumstances made it necessary to alter his tactics. But this realism and flexibility were combined in an extraordinary way with a total commitment to the letter of Marxist doctrine. As with Plekhanov, his acceptance of the faith was gradual, but once he had made his decision it was final and irrevocable. He refused to entertain in his mind even the slightest possibility of doubt. No revolution, he was convinced, could succeed without a correct revolutionary theory, and this had been provided once and for all by the founders of Marxism. He treated their works as holy writ, quoting from them liberally in support of his opinions. He liked to think of himself simply as one of the many loyal interpreters of Marx, although in fact his vision of the world was a good deal cruder than that of his teacher. He had an uncanny ability to persuade others, and apparently to convince himself as well, that all his deviations from strict orthodoxy were nothing of the kind, and that it was always his adversaries, never he himself or his followers, who were guilty of the fault of 'opportunism'. Yet this was a label that could justly be applied to his own policies: his tactical course consisted of a series of zigzags. Naturally he claimed that his changes of direction were legitimate and necessary adjustments, and that he was consistent in the ends he pursued. But they were often introduced so abruptly that his followers were left gasping in amazement, while his enemies denounced him as wholly unscrupulous. His apparent duplicity was the product of an underlying dichotomy in his character between emotion and intellect, between a revolutionary zeal which recognized no restraint and a genuine desire to remain loyal to the canons of doctrine. During some periods in his career reason prevailed, and he adhered to a sober orthodoxy; at other moments he allowed himself to be carried away by his urge to act, disregarding the possible consequences.

His early years, as one would expect, were a time of militant extremism. Among Social Democrats in the capital he soon became renowned for the vindictive note evident in his first polemical writings. These were screeds of formidable length, in which he catalogued each error committed by his adversary, examining it from every angle and subjecting it to ridicule and irony, until his opponent seemed to have been crushed by the sheer weight of the indictment. In a philippic entitled *Who are the 'Friends of the People' ...?*¹, which enjoyed a limited circulation in duplicated form, he denounced the Populists as philistines and 'petty bourgeois'. Their devotion to moral principle, he maintained, was nothing but a monstrous fraud. Only if they dropped their socialist phraseology and revealed themselves in their true colours could

¹ *Lenin*, i. 51-222.

collaboration between them and the Social Democrats become feasible. A few months later he was directing his fire simultaneously against two targets: the Populists and their leading Marxist critic. This article, printed in a miscellany destroyed by order of the censor, was a review of Struve's *Critical Notes*, which grew into a rather turgid treatise, almost equal in length to the work with which it dealt.¹ Lenin entitled it: 'The Economic Content of Populism and its Critique by Mr. Struve' (the 'Mr.' was a calculated insult), and added as a sub-title: 'A Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Literature'. Lenin was, of course, well aware that both Struve and himself belonged to the intelligentsia, and were *ipso facto* liable to be classified as 'bourgeois'; and that each of them was seeking to provide in his own way a rational explanation of the phenomena under discussion. But for him it was axiomatic that every individual expressed the interests of a particular class, perhaps unwittingly so; and just as he was convinced that Struve was a representative of the bourgeoisie, so he assumed that he himself was entitled to speak for the proletariat. In his view Struve's 'objectivism', his advocacy of capitalism, must necessarily indicate that he harboured secret sympathies for the capitalist class.

Lenin further argued that Struve's bourgeois tendencies were manifest in his willingness to consider the peasantry as a single entity, regardless of the differentiation between rich and poor. In the given circumstances any benefits derived from capitalism in the Russian countryside accrued to the 'rural petty bourgeoisie', while those peasants with little or no land shared the sufferings of the proletariat. Struve, he declared, looked upon capitalism 'as upon something in the future, instead of as something that has already developed, completely and finally, in the present'.² Completely and finally? This phrase, dropped so casually, opened up a whole new perspective. If capitalism had indeed reached full maturity in Russia, then it followed logically that the immediate objective must be to bring about, not the 'bourgeois-democratic revolution' of which Plekhanov had written, but the final proletarian upheaval; in other words, that Russian Marxists could ignore the theory of a two-phase revolution and set themselves the same tasks as their colleagues in the West. Although Lenin did not state his conclusions so explicitly, his gaze was clearly fixed on distant horizons.

In the spring of 1895 he left St. Petersburg for Switzerland, where he met Plekhanov and Axelrod. The latter expressed approval of his article against Struve, but thought that 'in dealing with the question of the socialists' tasks in Russia, he approached the problem in an abstract manner, and solved it without regard to [circumstances of] time and

¹ *Lenin*, i. 223-362.

² *Ibid.*, i. 353.

place, disregarding the peculiarities of social and historical conditions in Russia, and arguing as though we were living in Western Europe'. His attitude towards the liberals was unduly hostile. Plekhanov made the same point: 'You turn your back on the liberals, but we turn our faces toward them.'¹ Lenin still regarded the two *émigré* leaders with profound respect, and returned to Russia apparently convinced of the truth of their arguments. During the next few years—in his public writings, at least—he adopted a more moderate line.

Meanwhile Struve's views evolved from Marxism by way of neo-Kantian philosophy towards orthodox liberalism. This lent support to Lenin's contention that 'Legal Marxism', as this school of thought came to be called, was indeed 'bourgeois ideology' masquerading in Marxist guise. But matters were not quite so simple as that. In the first place the term 'Legal Marxism' was a misnomer. It implied that the fault lay in making contributions to the 'legal' (i.e. non-clandestine) press, or engaging in such other public political activities as the law permitted. In fact Marxists of all shades of thought, including Lenin himself, took advantage of these opportunities to popularize their views, even if this obliged them to refrain from expressing extreme opinions which might lead to the journal or book in question being subjected to repressive measures by the censor. Nevertheless the situation was clearly fraught with risk from the standpoint of those who attached supreme importance to the maintenance of revolutionary orthodoxy, since each writer was in a position to judge for himself how far he might go in concealing his views. Who was to determine the point at which a permissible tactical ruse became dangerous heresy? More particularly, who was to fix precisely the warmth of the welcome that it was permissible to extend to capitalism and its liberal exponents?

In practice all those who contributed to the public discussion with the Populists laid themselves open at one point or another to the charge of excessive leniency towards the bourgeoisie, or 'objectivism'. If one takes the articles which he published after his arrest in December 1895 as indicative of his true opinions, one would be obliged to conclude that Lenin had lost much of his anti-capitalist crusading zeal. He approached the facts of Russian economic life with as much academic impartiality as a Marxist commitment allowed. In 1899 his labours bore fruit in a solid scholarly work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, in which he said no more about the prospects of social revolution than Struve had done in his *Critical Notes*. Of particular interest was a dispute that broke out in March 1897 between the 'Legal Marxists' in St. Petersburg and the Marxist group at Samara, in which Lenin intervened on the side of the former. It concerned a debate at the Imperial

¹ *Perepiska*, i. 265-75.

Free Economic Society, in which Struve and Tugan-Baranovsky had argued that Russian grain prices should be raised to the world price level in order to increase the Government's holdings of foreign exchange, thereby helping to promote economic expansion. Maslov and his colleagues regarded this as 'a political scandal', since higher grain prices would place an intolerable burden upon the mass of consumers. They pointed out that many peasants were already so impoverished that they were obliged to buy grain in order to subsist during the lean winter months. Lenin considered that this point of view represented a concession to Populist sentimentality. Higher grain prices, he argued, would facilitate the development of capitalism, and this factor outweighed the hardship caused to the peasants. In any case, he added, the consumer did not really benefit by cheap bread, since this meant that wage rates were kept correspondingly low. Privately he declared that he was 'taking up the cudgels with both hands' in Struve's defence. It was with some difficulty that an open breach with Maslov's group was averted.¹

In another article, this time on an historical theme, Lenin's aversion to Populism led him to trace the spiritual roots of Russian Marxism back to one Skaldin, a free-trader of the 1860's whose liberalism had been moderate in the extreme. Later he admitted to Potresov that he had overstated his case.² Plekhanov, too, at times adopted an inordinately moderate attitude towards the liberals. He once wrote to the editor of *Russkaya Mysl'* to point out that they had much in common, whereas between Marxists and Populists there was 'a bottomless abyss'.³

The conventional Bolshevik picture of this epoch is one of Lenin standing fast, as a lone pillar of revolutionary orthodoxy, while the other leaders, and particularly Struve, are swayed by latent bourgeois tendencies. The reality was somewhat different. All the Marxist leaders were bound together in a shifting alliance and were subject to the pressures that this inevitably entailed. They exercised a certain influence upon one another, which varied in strength according to changing circumstances. Despite their polemic in 1894-5, Lenin and Struve remained good friends. In the years immediately following they were closer to one another politically than either of them later cared to admit. Partly this was due to enforced physical separation: while Struve remained an active figure in the journalistic world of the capital, Lenin's road led to prison and exile. But it was also due to the fact that all the Marxist writers recognized an obligation to extend provisional

¹ *Lenin*, ii. 3-4, 583-4; N. Angarsky, *Legal'nyy marksizm* (M., 1925), pp. 100-7.

² *Lenin*, ii. 314; Martov, *Zapiski* . . . , pp. 304-5; A. N. Potresov and B. I. Nikolaevsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36, 42.

³ *Plekhanov*, viii. 221.

and conditional support to capitalism, as a supposedly inevitable phase in Russia's economic development. This meant that they had to take a long-term view of the social evils it involved, consoling themselves with the thought that they were necessary for the ultimate liberation of the masses; it also implied that they had to take a lenient view of the liberals. Heresy was latent in the very situation in which they found themselves. None of the Marxist leaders could claim to have emerged from the test with his reputation for orthodoxy quite untarnished. The most they could do to salve their consciences was to promote, directly or indirectly, the spread of revolutionary ideas among the urban masses—and the necessity for this was recognized by all without exception.

During the 1890's it seemed as though the hopes which Plekhanov had placed in the proletariat were being realized. There was an upsurge of labour unrest, and in many centres the more militant elements responded to Marxist agitators. Local Social-Democratic organizations came into being, and by the end of the decade there even existed (on paper at least) a Social-Democratic Party. These successes, encouraging though they were, could not conceal the fact that the Social Democrats had only a very tenuous hold upon their followers. This was, of course, partly due to the physical obstacles that stood in the way of clandestine political activity under the absolutist régime. But the chief reason lay in the character of the movement itself, which suffered from a fundamental structural defect. It was the creation, not of the workers themselves, but of intellectuals eager to win mass support. To use a military analogy, the general staff came into being before either officers or men had been recruited. The great cultural divide in Russian society made it extremely difficult for the *litterati* who occupied the leading posts in the clandestine organizations to find a common language with the rank and file. In the words of one sympathetic critic: 'The Party was continually seeking to approach the workers—the new power in Russian society. It dreamed of the proletariat, served it, sacrificed itself for its happiness—but it *was* not a proletarian party such as those of Western Europe, which had grown up *out of* the labour movement, instead of on its behalf.'¹

The pattern followed by the industrial disturbances of the 1890's was distressingly uniform. Local grievances, generally real enough, would bring the men together at workshop or factory level, and spokesmen would formulate demands for presentation to the management. These were almost invariably non-political in character and related to wages or working conditions. But they were backed by a refusal to work, and sometimes by violence—although cases of large-scale

¹ E. D. Kuskova, in *Byloye* (1906), no. 5, p. 322.

damage to property during strikes were now comparatively rare.¹ In larger enterprises in the more advanced regions managements were sometimes inclined to grant the men's demands without delay; elsewhere their first reaction was to call for the police and troops. Between 1895 and 1899 the army intervened in 269 industrial disputes, and there were a number of clashes involving loss of life.² On occasion the police adopted a sympathetic attitude towards the strikers, even though they were technically breaking the law. Army officers, on the other hand, tended to take a stern and insensitive line. This was especially the case with those in charge of cossack units, whose efforts to uphold order were frequently marked by an excessive show of force. Modern techniques of crowd control were unknown in the Russia of the 1890's, and some officers seem to have taken it for granted that bloodshed was an unfortunate but necessary means of intimidating 'rebellious elements' into submission. Naturally, where shooting took place, this served to embitter the atmosphere still further. Often it provoked action by workers in other enterprises, which it was the main aim of the military to prevent. Since labour organization was at this time still in its infancy, cases of sympathy strikes in other towns, or in all branches of a particular industry in the same town, were fairly rare. Suppression of the strike—whether by force, by a weakening of the men's morale, or by a negotiated settlement—usually brought reprisals, sometimes in contravention of earlier promises that there would be no victimization. During the last five years of the nineteenth century arrests were made in 164 industrial disputes and 31 groups of strikers were sent for trial.³

There had been major strikes and disturbances in Russian industry since the 1870's, but it was not until the 1890's that labour unrest became a serious national problem. The first sign of trouble was in Yuzovka, then a small mining village in the Donets valley (named after its founder, the Welsh pioneer Hughes, subsequently called Stalino—and now Donetsk). The violent riots there in August 1892 were not unconnected with the cholera epidemic in the Volga area, in which some doctors and public health officials were the victims of popular indignation. They testified to the rawness of conditions in this newly-developed industrial area. The following year witnessed a relatively well-organized strike at Shuya which set off a long chain of disturbances in the textile-manufacturing areas of central European Russia. In April 1895 a serious clash between troops and unarmed workers

¹ Of 1,765 strikes registered by the authorities between 1895 and 1904, 44 were marked by 'destructive actions' (V. Varzar, cited in *Rabochiy yezhegodnik* (Spb., 1906), p. 224).

² V. I. Nevsky, *Ocherki po istorii RKP* (Lg., 1925), p. 388, citing V. Varzar, *Statisticheskiye svedeniya o stachkakh . . . 1895-1904 gg.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

occurred at Yaroslavl, in which there were a number of casualties. Characteristic of one attitude in official quarters towards the labour question at this time was Nicholas II's inept message of personal congratulation to the army unit concerned in suppressing the strike. The trouble seething in several industries in St. Petersburg reached a peak in June 1896 when some 30,000 textile workers withdrew their labour. The unusual degree of resolution and solidarity which they showed made it a landmark in the history of the period. Its successful outcome, from the strikers' point of view, was in no small measure due to the sympathy with which their case was regarded by public opinion and by the more enlightened officials. Pressure was brought to bear on the employers, and their concessions served as a basis for the law of 2 June 1897. But those who hoped to win further reforms by industrial action were doomed to disappointment, since the economic climate now changed for the worse. The metallurgical industry in particular was hit by a severe depression. The total number of strikers fell from 60,000 in 1897 to 43,000 in 1898; in the following year it again rose, but these outbreaks were generally defensive in character and were settled in the employers' favour. The year 1900, with only 29,000 strikers, was remarkably calm.¹

As these figures indicate, only a very small proportion of the labour force was involved in this unrest. Regional differences were also important. The Ukraine remained outwardly tranquil: in the Donets valley, for example, the average annual number of workers involved in strikes during the 1890's was no more than 3,000.² In the Urals and Transcaucasia serious trouble began only towards the end of the decade. So far as Great Russia was concerned, the main areas affected were St. Petersburg and the central industrial region. It was the regions inhabited by non-Russian nationalities—chiefly Poles, Letts, and Jews—that set the pace for the country as a whole. This demonstrated that national sentiment was at least as important as a feeling of social solidarity in stimulating unrest. In Russia, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, socialism and nationalism grew up together and interacted upon one another, now in concert and now in conflict. The Russian Marxists consistently played down the significance of nationalism, but were soon to find that it confronted them with a host of problems.

In Poland the authorities were at times prepared to tolerate the conflict between capital and labour in the hope of thereby weakening

¹ Ibid., p. 387; cf. *Doklad o russkom sotsial-demokraticheskom dvizhenii* (Geneva, 1900), p. 12. The official figures relate only to enterprises under the factory inspectorate.

² *Vtoroy s'yezd RSDRP (yul'-avgust 1903 g.): protokoly* (M., 1959) [hereafter cited as *Prot. II*], p. 543.

the national opposition to Russian rule. In the early 1890's six out of every seven strikes within the boundaries of the empire took place in Poland. At the end of the decade the proportion was still as high as two out of five.¹ Among Polish workers the custom of celebrating May Day with political demonstrations caught on at an early date. In 1890 some 10,000 men took to the streets of Warsaw, whereas it was only in the following year that a few dozen workers in St. Petersburg, meeting in secret in woods outside the city, made a modest attempt to emulate their example. A masons' strike at Łódź in 1892 developed into a pitched battle with Russian troops in which 46 people were killed and some 200 injured. In the Dąbrowa (Dombrovo) coalfields strikes and demonstrations with a political flavour were endemic throughout the decade. This unrest gave an impetus to the Polish left. The strongest political organization was the Polish Socialist Party (P.P.S.), founded in November 1892, which placed national independence in the forefront of its programme. This demand was regarded by a group of extremists, led by Rosa Luxemburg, L. Jogiches, and others, as incompatible with Marxist internationalism. In the spring of 1893 they seceded from the P.P.S. and shortly afterwards formed a rival organization, the Social-Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland (S.D.K.P.). The S.D.K.P. leaders held that with the growth of capitalist industry in Russian Poland her future was indissolubly linked to that of the other provinces of the empire, and that once the autocracy had been replaced by a constitutional order Poland's legitimate aspirations would be satisfied by the grant of autonomous status. The P.P.S. refused to collaborate with Russian revolutionary groups unless they explicitly accepted the principle of national self-determination for Poland and the right of the P.P.S. to control all revolutionary activity on Polish soil. The S.D.K.P., on the other hand, eagerly awaited the opportunity to merge itself in an all-Russian Social-Democratic party, in order to be able to pursue the common task more effectively. Paradoxically, however, the relations between the S.D.K.P. leaders and the fathers of Russian Marxism left much to be desired. While in Geneva Jogiches quarrelled with Plekhanov: one of the issues involved was the disposal of Jogiches' considerable private fortune, which he was prepared to place at the service of the Liberation of Labour group if he were given a decisive voice in determining how it should be spent. Plekhanov rejected the offer as savouring of blackmail, and the money was used to finance operations for which he had little sympathy. At the 1893 congress of the Socialist International Plekhanov took his revenge by supporting the claim of the P.P.S. to be the sole representative of the Polish working class. The S.D.K.P. delegation was expelled, on the grounds that its

¹ V. I. Nevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

mandate was invalid—a humiliation which Luxemburg and her associates could not easily forgive. In the years that followed the S.D.K.P., although far weaker than the P.P.S., succeeded in consolidating its position. In December 1899 it absorbed one of the two Social-Democratic groups that existed in Lithuania and amended its title to the 'Social-Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania' (S.D.K.P.L.). But its relations with the Russians still remained cool.¹

In Latvia labour activity centred on Riga. The Lettish Marxists, who played an important role in the country's intellectual life from 1891 onwards, looked for inspiration to Germany rather than to Russia. For several years the censor turned a blind eye to the barely-concealed propagation of Social-Democratic views in the newspaper *Dienas Lapa* ('Daily News'); but when an attempt was made to establish a clandestine party the police intervened. In May 1897 extensive arrests almost entirely destroyed the Lettish Marxist *élite*. Two years later, when a sanguinary clash took place in Riga between Russian troops and striking Lettish workers, the few Social Democrats who remained at liberty were unable to intervene to any effect.

Thus for various reasons neither the Poles nor the Letts were in a position to exercise a major influence upon the formation of a Social-Democratic party in Russia. Nor, on account of their physical remoteness, were the Georgian Marxists, who won considerable support among intellectuals during the 1890's. This role fell to the Jews living in the 'pale of settlement'.² The Russian Government's policy of racial discrimination helped to make educated Russian Jews more conscious of their national individuality, and the idea began to gain currency that their best means of defence lay in an independent Jewish movement enjoying mass support. The workers and artisans of the 'pale' had behind them a long tradition of association for mutual assistance and protection. In the 1890's these organizations split along class lines, and local 'chest funds' (*kassy*) came into existence, which could serve as focal points for a broad-based labour movement with scarcely concealed revolutionary aims. The police at first did little to obstruct these

¹ M. K. Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: an outline history* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), pp. 19ff.; W. Feldman, *Geschichte der politischen Ideen in Polen* (Munich-Berlin, 1917), pp. 322ff.; *Perepiska*, i. 74-75; V. Vagan-yan, op. cit., pp. 117-19.

² L. Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia* (New Haven, 1944-51), ii. 143ff.; K. S. Pinson, 'Arkadiy Kremer, Vladimir Medem and the ideology of the Jewish Bund', in *Jewish Social Studies* (N.Y., 1945), vii. 233-64; A. L. Patkin, *The origins of the Russian-Jewish labour movement* (L., 1947); Yu. O. Martov, *Zapiski* . . . , ch. V; S. Rabinowitsch, *Die Organisation des jüdischen Proletariats in Russland* (Karlsruhe, 1903); N. Bukhbinder, in *Proletarskaya Revolyutsiya* [hereafter cited as *PR*] (1924), no. 34, pp. 203-8; A. Kramer [Kremer], in *ibid.* (1922), no. 11, pp. 50-56.

activities. By the end of 1895 there existed in Vilno alone 27 such organizations, with about 850 members.¹ Other towns of the region, such as Minsk, Vitebsk, and Białystok, soon followed suit. On May Day 1895 Yuly O. Tserderbaum (Martov) (1873–1923), subsequently one of the leaders of the Russian Social-Democratic Party, delivered an address to some fellow-agitators in which he called on them to adopt a specifically Jewish policy. The Russian workers, he argued, could not always be relied upon to live up to the principles of international proletarian solidarity; their Jewish brethren had their own interests, which made it reasonable for them to form a separate organization. ‘The growth of national and class consciousness’, he declared, ‘must go hand in hand.’² The association which he advocated was set up without further ado. It co-ordinated the activities of the local chest funds and carried on socialist agitation in Yiddish with the aid of a newspaper, *Die Arbeiterstimme*, which was published abroad. It was not until October 1897 that the organization was established on a formal footing, when it took the title of ‘The General Union of Jewish Workers in Russia and Poland’—generally known, from its Yiddish form, simply as ‘the Bund’. The main figure in the Bund was Alexander (Arkadiy) Kremer, who from the start had taken a prominent part in propaganda among the workers of Vilno. Men from this city (the centre of Russian Jewry) were active in managing the organization’s affairs. The Bund was run on centralist lines, but advocated the application of democratic principles of organization as widely as was compatible with security from arrest. Most of its leaders held office by virtue of election. The Bund could also claim to have more genuine working-class support than any other Social-Democratic organization in Russia at the time. It was not without significance that, of the thirteen men present at its inaugural congress, only five were intellectuals.³ Despite police persecution it steadily expanded its activities in the years that followed. By 1900 it could claim 1,400 members in Vilno, 1,000 each in Minsk and Białystok, and hundreds in several other White Russian and Polish towns. It also had some incipient trade unions under its control. In two and a half years 28,000 workers under its influence were said to have staged 312 strikes, of which more than 90 per cent. were successful.⁴

¹ A. L. Patkin, p. 132; S. Rabinowitsch, p. 150.

² [Yu. O. Martov], *Povorotnyy punkt v yevreyskom rabochem dvizhenii* (Geneva, 1900). His speech was published as a pamphlet by the Jewish Bund long after Martov had cast off his sympathies for the idea of an independent Jewish workers’ party, and when, as an enthusiastic internationalist, he could not help feeling embarrassed at his earlier deviation. Cf. *Zapiski sotsial-demokrata*, pp. 244–7.

³ K. S. Pinson, p. 240.

⁴ S. Rabinowitsch, pp. 152ff.; *Vozzvanie k yevreyskoy intelligentsii* (Geneva, 1901), p. 10.

The very extent of these triumphs aroused some distrust among Social Democrats in Russia proper: for the Bund's relatively high degree of organizational efficiency was due precisely to the presence within its ranks of that artisan element which in their eyes lacked the proletarian virtues. They were also concerned at the fact that, to compete with the appeal of Zionism, which was making considerable headway amongst the distressed population of the 'pale', the Bund soon began to veer towards the more nationalistic line foreshadowed in Martov's speech of May 1895.¹

Here were the seeds of serious conflict—one in which national feelings, although seldom openly expressed, lay hidden beneath the formalities of comradeship. The Jewish Social Democrats' attitude towards the Russian Marxist movement was an ambivalent one. They looked forward to the day when it should attain the same level of development that had been reached by the Bund, and were ready to give practical assistance to that end. But they did not want to lose their own identity in an all-Russian organization dominated by non-Jewish elements, which could endanger their own achievements or future prospects. In general the rank and file tended to be more parochial in their outlook than the intellectuals, many of whom had been educated in Russian schools or universities and felt drawn to Russian culture.

Jewish influence in Russian Social-Democratic groups dated back to 1895. It was in that year that a number of emissaries left Vilno for St. Petersburg and several other centres to recommend the adoption of more energetic tactics—in the jargon of the day, 'to proceed from propaganda to agitation'.

In the early 1890's the Social-Democratic movement in the ethnically Russian territories was still in an embryonic form. As Axelrod wrote later, 'there were scarcely any genuine Social Democrats in Russia, unless one counts a few young men who studied Marx and engaged in the theoretical education of individual workers'.² The main type of organization was the propagandist 'circle' (*kruzhok*), which carried on a tradition that went back to groups established by the Populists in the early 1880's. This was simply an arrangement whereby an intellectual—usually a student—would pass on his learning to such of the local workers who could summon up sufficient enthusiasm, after some fourteen hours of gruelling toil, to run the risk of attending a clandestine meeting, for which the penalty, if they were discovered, might well be a prison term. The instructors would often be obliged to commence their courses with elementary general knowledge, and then work their

¹ See below, p. 119.

² Letter to Russian Social Democrats in New York, 2 March 1902, in Axelrod Archives, Amsterdam.

way gradually towards a discussion of contemporary social and economic questions. The groups were of necessity small, fifteen participants being regarded as the upper limit. Each would have its modest chest fund, maintained by members' contributions, which was spent largely on clandestine literature, acquired for the most part from abroad. The difficulties involved in bridging the social gulf between intellectuals and workers could be seen in the pattern of organization: at the centre was the students' circle, of which each member would have charge of one of several factory groups. In some cases this function might be performed by an intermediate 'workers' organization'. The police sought to penetrate the system by using *agents provocateur*. Arrests frequently prevented completion of the course of study, and it was rare for a circle to last for more than a year without being detected.¹ Those who escaped discovery would co-opt new members, thereby enabling a tenuous continuity to be preserved; but very often the groups were so isolated as to be unaware of one another's existence. Their immediate impact was limited. The student propagandists comforted themselves with the thought that in existing circumstances it was impossible to do more than help prepare future leaders—'Russian Bebels', as one of them put it—for the party that would one day emerge. The effort involved often seemed scarcely worth while. The teachers were frequently disappointed at the progress made by their pupils; the latter resented the abstract nature of the subject-matter and were perplexed by what seemed to them the pointless conflict between Populists and Marxists. 'We felt like game-birds under fire from two sides,' one of them recalled later.²

The inadequacies of the propagandist system rapidly became apparent. 'In my circle', wrote Martov, 'I twice delivered talks on the aims and methods of socialism, but real life kept on interfering. . . . Either the members of the circle would themselves raise the question of some event that had occurred in their factory, . . . or someone from another workshop would appear, and we would have to spend the time discussing the conditions there.'³ The time had come, he decided, to adopt more active methods: to assume the leadership of strikes wherever they occurred with the object of imparting a political character to the workers' struggle for economic improvements. In practice this meant printing and distributing leaflets systematizing the men's grievances and attempting to extend the scope of each dispute as widely as possible.

¹ M. I. Brusnev, in *Revolyutsiya i RKP(b) v materialakh i dokumentakh*, 2nd ed. (M., 1924-5), i. 192; K. M. Takhtarev ('Peterburzhets'), *Ocherk Peterburgskogo rabocheho dvizheniya 1890-kh gg.* (London, 1902), p. 5.

² V. A. Shelgunov, in *Revolyutsiya i RKP(b)* . . . , i. 206.

³ Yu. O. Martov, *Zapiski sotsial-demokrata*, p. 285.

This was seen as an important step towards the goal of making Social Democracy a genuine mass labour movement, instead of merely a sect.

Although propaganda and agitation were clearly interdependent functions, the merits of the new tactics were solemnly discussed in recondite theoretical terms that seemed to bear little relation to the practical issues involved. An important role in this controversy was played by a pamphlet entitled *On Agitation*, which had been written by Kremer and Martov in Vilno and was circulated widely around the groups in Russia. In the course of 1895 Martov and a colleague brought this document to St. Petersburg. We are told that it caused 'many heated arguments', but that finally the decision was taken to embark upon the new course.¹ The various propagandist circles in the capital united to form an organization which eventually adopted the flamboyant title 'The St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class'.² In December 1895, before the new body could make its existence felt, the arrest took place of six of its most prominent leaders—including Lenin, who was thereby precluded from playing the conspicuous role in its affairs ascribed to him by the more imaginative Bolshevik historians. It was Martov who one week later gave the League its name and arranged the issue of its first leaflets; but he had barely time to rally the organization before he himself, along with several other leaders, was seized by the police. Other arrests followed, and by August 1896 only one man belonging to the original nucleus of seventeen, S. I. Radchenko, was still at liberty. The League was thus in no position to direct the textile workers in their famous strike, and the exaggerated claims sometimes made to this effect must be treated with reserve. It was unable to give the strikers any significant financial support, and even its agitational leaflets often appeared several days after the events they described. Perhaps its most important function was to present the men's viewpoint to the educated public. It also had the less tangible result of showing many workers that a clandestine political organization, if it could keep itself alive, might well provide useful assistance in an industrial dispute. But these achievements fell a long way short of the ambitious objectives sketched for the League by its founders.

By the autumn of 1896 Radchenko was too concerned with the task

¹ N. K. Krupskaya, in *Revolyutsiya i RKP(b)* . . . , i. 254. Takhtarev also states (p. 16) that the decision was taken under the influence of developments in the western region. It is worth emphasizing this point in view of the tendency among Soviet historians to play down the role of the western region (and especially of the Jewish Bund) in the development of Russian Social Democracy.

² Takhtarev, op. cit.; K. Ya[kubova], in *Byloye* (1907), no. 21, pp. 134-53; V. I. Nevsky, op. cit., pp. 400-28; I. Nikitin, *Iz istorii Peterburgskogo 'Soyuza Bor'by . . .'* (M., 1947); O. Chaadaeva (ed.), 'Iz istorii rabochego dvizheniya . . .', in *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1939), no. 93, pp. 119-89.

of ensuring his own safety from arrest to provide the League with effective leadership. Although he retained control of its official seal, authority passed to a new team headed by K. M. Takhtarev, V. P. Makhnovets (Akimov), and V. Ivanshin. They drew the conclusion that the League's weakness was due to excessive centralization. Its affairs had hitherto been managed by a group of intellectuals, all of whom had found convenient excuses for not admitting workers to their counsels.¹ The more zealous leaders developed a veritable cult of conspiracy. Absorbed in their continuous battle of wits with the police, they lived in a world of pseudonyms, code-words, and secret assignments that was far removed from that of the worker at the bench, for whom revolutionary work was at best a leisure activity. Radchenko was an engineer by profession, who took a keen pride in the technical skill that enabled him to survive while almost all his less experienced comrades fell victim to police vigilance. The respectful admiration felt by rank-and-file workers for such men was tempered by a certain amount of distrust. For all too often they gave the impression that they looked upon 'the masses' as combustible material with which to ignite the revolution; that behind their professed devotion to the common struggle they harboured purposes of their own that were not necessarily identical with the task of improving the workers' lot. The difference of approach was rooted in underlying psychological attitudes. For the ordinary working man the act of joining a clandestine organization was no mere formality but an epoch-making step, to which he attached an almost religious significance. He identified himself with his group and relished the comradeship it provided. Its survival became for him an end in itself. He was afraid lest the intellectuals, with their light-hearted approach, might expose it to unnecessary risk and jeopardize the fruits that had been won at such cost. Tension between the leaders and the rank and file was common to almost all Russian labour organizations at this time. It sprang from the unnatural structure of the Social-Democratic movement, and focused on the intellectuals' reluctance to yield their positions of authority. They argued that they were concerned solely to preserve the security of the group, but some of them were prepared to admit privately that the reason was simpler: they felt that their experience gave them qualifications for leadership which men recently thrust up from below could not hope to possess. Takhtarev and his colleagues considered these claims unjustified. Early in 1897 he prepared a statute for the League which gave greater weight to the local factory groups *vis-à-vis* the centre. Lenin had just been released from prison and was allowed a few days' liberty in the capital before leaving to serve his sentence of three years' exile in

¹ Martov, *Zapiski* . . . , pp. 270-1.

Siberia. He used the opportunity to establish contact with the new leaders of the League, and was dismayed to find that their views differed so radically from his own. But shortly afterwards they emigrated abroad or were arrested, and the statute remained on paper.¹

The 'old guard' also considered that the new leaders of the League placed too much emphasis upon the satisfaction of the workers' immediate economic needs, to the neglect of the political struggle against the autocratic régime. This was the origin of the so-called 'Economist' heresy, the ideological implications of which will be discussed below. So far as the St. Petersburg organization was concerned, its activities in 1896 belied the charge: its leaders, far from restricting their agitation to 'economic' (i.e. industrial) issues, were responsible for giving the labour movement in the capital its first overtly political note. The 'old guard' had of necessity paid due heed to the fact that a large proportion of those they addressed could be expected to retain some of the peasants' traditional loyalty to the Tsar. They had therefore proceeded cautiously in broaching political issues. It was characteristic that a proclamation written by Lenin in April 1896, and smuggled out of prison for use by the League, had called for a struggle against 'the capitalists and all other [unnamed] foes of the working class'.² But the Government's reactions to their second strike in June convinced many workers that they could expect little assistance from this quarter, and in November the League issued its first leaflet directly attacking the Tsar. Further evidence of the new leaders' attitude to political questions is provided by their readiness to collaborate with a group of Populists who proclaimed their adherence to the principles of *Narodnaya Volya*.³ The apolitical trends of which they were accused only became apparent once they had moved abroad and the League had virtually faded from the scene.

In several other cities attempts were made to establish organizations with aims similar to those of the St. Petersburg League. In Moscow⁴ the local Social Democrats had a formidable adversary in the security chief S. V. Zubatov, himself a former revolutionary, who knew the problems of the 'underground' at first hand. He succeeded in penetrating their organizations, which collapsed almost as soon as they were founded. In April 1894 several propagandist groups coalesced to form

¹ K. M. Takhtarev, pp. 67-72; *Lenin*, iv. 387.

² *Lenin*, i. 454.

³ K. Ya[kubova], pp. 145-53.

⁴ S. I. Mitskevich, *Na grani dvukh epokh* (M., 1937), V. I. Nevsky, pp. 443-57; *Prot. II*, pp. 620-32; *Rabotnik* (Geneva, 1897), no. 3-4, pp. 33-52, 94-99 (reprinted in *Pervyy s'yezd RSDRP: dokumenty i materialy* (M., 1958), pp. 139-55); S. Chernomordik (ed.), *Put' k oktyabryu: sbornik statey . . .*, (M., 1923), ii. 11ff.

a 'Central Workers' Union', organized on relatively democratic lines: its central nucleus consisted of six intellectuals and six workers. It did not, however, give much evidence of its existence until May 1895, when M. N. Mandelshtam (Lyadov), in later years a prominent Bolshevik, arranged a meeting at a suburban rendezvous attended by several hundred persons. This venture resulted in widespread arrests. During the following winter a new centre came into being, which soon claimed 2,000 adherents. Its name, the 'Moscow Workers' Union', as well as the fact that it was organized around factory chest funds, show that it was keyed to industrial rather than political action. An attempt to call a strike in sympathy with the St. Petersburg textile workers led to its liquidation. Some of those who were arrested confessed their offence and were treated in a kindly fashion by the artful Zubatov, who engaged them in polite conversation and even, we are told, offered them glasses of tea during interrogation; a few received from the police compensation for the pay they had lost by ceasing work. By these and other means Zubatov created an atmosphere of mutual distrust in which clandestine activity became virtually impossible. All the threads were in his hands, and during the next few years one *coup* followed another with monotonous regularity. Among Moscow workers the conviction grew that conspiratorial methods led nowhere.

In other towns of central European Russia the immediate outlook for Social Democracy was scarcely more auspicious. At Ivanovo-Voznesensk a 'Workers' Union' was formed in 1895, which survived for two years and won a certain amount of mass support, but its activity was limited to peaceful propaganda. Attempts to proceed to mass agitation met with little success and sometimes led to ill-feeling between workers and intellectuals. The latter found it difficult to exert an influence in such settlements without attracting the attention of the police by their physical appearance, manners, and dress. In other provincial towns such as Tver, Tula, Samara, or Voronezh there were small groups of Marxists, generally exiles living under police surveillance, who made sporadic efforts to approach the local workers. The results were nowhere spectacular.¹

In the Ukraine small but vigorous groups emerged in a number of cities. Some of them issued clandestine local newspapers, which indicated that they were more concerned with political questions than the groups in Great Russia. They were also ahead in making the transition to agitation, which in the south generally came about in 1897-8. Their popular following, however, was seldom impressive. In

¹ V. I. Nevsky, pp. 457ff.; A. Ryabinin, in *Minuvshiye gody* (1908), no. 5-6; M. F. Vladimirsky, *Ocherki rabochego i s.-d. dvizheniya v Nizhnem Novgorode i Sormove* (M., 1957), pp. 47ff.; *Rabocheye dvizhenie v Ivanovo-Voznesenskom rayone za posledniye 15 let* (Geneva, 1900).

Odessa Social Democracy had less success than might have been expected in view of the relatively large number of industrial workers in the city. The various groups that existed failed to link up in an effective single organization; *agents provocateur* were constantly active, and there was a succession of arrests. Nikolayev boasted a 'South Russian Workers' Union', the influence of which was more limited than the name suggested; its chief claim on our attention is that its leading figure was L. D. Bronstein (1879-1940), later famous as Trotsky. At Yekaterinoslav there were at first two organizations, advocating economic and political activity respectively, which in December 1897 joined to form a 'League of Struggle' on the St. Petersburg model. Kharkov stood somewhat apart from the general trend. The principal personality among the local Social Democrats was F. A. Lipkin (Cherevanin), an independent-minded man whose Marxism contained a refreshing infusion of ethical idealism. In the Donets and Don valleys the movement had as yet made little headway.¹

It is against this background that one must consider the important position occupied by Kiev. Here the political zeal of the south fused with the organizing ability of the west. There were Social-Democratic groups among the Polish and Jewish workers in the city as well as among the Russians. The latter, led by the energetic B. L. Eydelman, a firm advocate of political action and conspiratorial methods, maintained contact with other centres and sought to weld the scattered organizations together into a united all-Russian party in which his own orthodox group would play a leading part. Eydelman's ambitious plans led to rivalry between Kiev and Vilno. Whichever centre dominated the party's foundation congress could be expected to exercise a strong influence over its future course of development. The Jewish leaders had particular reasons for wishing the Russian groups to unite under their auspices. They realized that the authority which they exercised over Jewish workers within the area of the 'pale' would rest on insecure foundations unless it were sanctioned by the Russians themselves. They also hoped that such action would greatly strengthen the cosmopolitan element in Jewish Social Democracy against the growing tendency towards nationalism. In the autumn of 1896 Kremer visited St. Petersburg and Kiev. It was agreed that he and Takhtarev, of the St. Petersburg League, should go to Switzerland to solicit the approval of the *émigré* leaders for the enterprise. Their attitude, however, was none too encouraging.² Meanwhile Eydelman went ahead independently with his own arrangements. He toured Vilno, St. Petersburg and

¹ V. I. Nevsky, pp. 504ff.; *Iz istorii rabocheho dvizheniya v Odesse i Nikolayeve* (Geneva, 1900).

² V. P. Makhnovets (Akimov), in *Minuvshiye gody* (1908), no. 2, pp. 133-4; *Perepiska*, pp. 172-3.

Moscow in the hope of persuading the groups in those cities to recognize as their own organ a periodical which he planned to publish in Kiev, to be called *Rabochaya Gazeta* ('The Workers' Paper'). The first two committees were reluctant to accept this proposal, which implied subordination to Kiev, but all three groups agreed to attend a meeting there in March 1897. Whether by accident or design, the Vilno delegate failed to appear, and the only other person present was a representative of the 'old guard' in St. Petersburg. Such a gathering was clearly too small to be designated a Party congress, but its composition was such as to facilitate Eydelman's intentions. It was decided that his group, while merging formally with the other Kiev circles in a 'League of Struggle', should secretly preserve its separate identity and proceed with preparations for a congress. It was to publish *Rabochaya Gazeta* (two issues of which appeared later in the year), and maintain contact with the other organizations that were to be invited.

Eydelman was clearly less concerned to ensure that the forthcoming congress should be representative than that it should have an acceptable political colouring. The delegate invited from St. Petersburg was not one of the present leaders of the League but the arch-'conspirator' Radchenko; and he arranged that Yekaterinoslav should be represented by a man who had recently moved there from Kiev. No one was invited from Odessa, Nikolayev or Ivanovo—in the first two cases ostensibly because it was feared that the organizations concerned had been penetrated by police agents. The Kharkov group was invited to attend, but Cherevanin refused on the grounds that in the prevailing circumstances a congress would be a risky undertaking, and could in any case only lead to a 'mechanical unification' devoid of real substance. He argued that the local organizations would be better employed in trying to consolidate their popular support. Kiev itself was allotted three delegates. The same number were to attend from the Bund, which indicated that Eydelman was not likely to have everything his own way. The establishment of the Jewish organization in October 1897 strengthened the hand of the Vilno leaders, who could now claim to represent an entire region instead of just a city. Moreover, it was the Bund that made the practical arrangements for the congress, which was held in its stronghold of Minsk on 1-3 March 1898.¹

If the circumstances in which the congress was convoked bore the character of a compromise, its actual proceedings resulted in a victory for the Bund. The discussions were conducted on an amicable informal

¹ B. L. Eydelman in *PR* (1921), no. 1, pp. 20-81; (1928), no. 81, pp. 137-51; I. Tatarov in *ibid.* (1928), no. 74, pp. 3-21; no. 81, pp. 165-9; P. L. Tuchapsky, in *Pervyy s'yezd RSDRP . . .*, pp. 214ff.; *K 25-letiyu I-go s'yezda partii, 1898-1923* (M.-Lg., 1923); A. Vanovsky, in *Sotsialisticheskiiy vestnik*, (N.Y., 1950), no. 628-9, pp. 22-24.

basis. Theoretical issues likely to provoke conflict were deliberately avoided. The new party, which was eventually called the 'Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party' (R.S.D.R.P.),¹ was endowed with a reasonably democratic statute. Eydelman apparently expressed his preference for a centralized pattern of organization, but did not press his opinions too strongly. (The reasons why his determination weakened at the last moment are none too clear.) The Central Committee was bound to consult the Party Congress in important matters that did not require immediate decision. Local committees were left free to implement its directives in the form they found most appropriate to local conditions, and in exceptional cases could even refuse to comply with its demands. The Bund was admitted to the Party as 'an autonomous organization independent solely in matters of particular concern to the Jewish proletariat'—an ingenious formula that was to provoke much recrimination later. The congress appointed the *émigré* League of Russian Social Democrats Abroad as the Party's foreign agency and the Kiev *Rabochaya Gazeta* as its official organ. Radchenko, Eydelman, and Kremer were appointed to the Central Committee. The proceedings ended with a modest celebration at which those present drank a toast 'that the new Party may not be a still-born child'.

A few days later the infant fell prey to the watchful Zubatov. Some 500 arrests were made, including 175 in Kiev and over 50 in Moscow. By January 1899 the police claimed that they had seized eight of the nine delegates to the congress. *Rabochaya Gazeta* ceased publication. The Central Committee was paralysed. The sole relic of the congress was a manifesto, written by Struve, which was memorable for a forthright statement of the doctrine of hegemony:

The further east one goes, so the bourgeoisie becomes politically more feeble, timid and mean, and the greater are the political and cultural tasks that fall to the lot of the proletariat. On its firm shoulders the Russian working class must bear, and is bearing, the burden of winning political freedom.²

¹ *Rossiyskaya Sotsial-Demokraticheskaya Rabochaya Partiya*. The term *Rossiyskaya* was adopted in preference to *Russkaya* to emphasize the Party's international character. A majority of delegates opposed the inclusion of the word *Rabochaya* (Labour) on the grounds that the Party should not pretend to be what it was not; but this was later inserted by Struve (cf. Akimov, pp. 152, 161).

² *Pervyy s'yezd RSDRP* . . ., p. 80. Struve later stated that he deliberately refrained from expressing his personal views in this document ('My contacts and conflicts with Lenin', *Slav. and E. Europ. Rev.* (1934-5), xiii. 75). A. P. Mendel points out that its spirit accorded with Struve's other writings at the time (*Dilemmas of progress* . . ., p. 178). In general Struve's memoirs, written long after the event, display a concern by the author to disavow his revolutionary past. Cf. also R. Kindersley, *The first Russian Revisionists*, p. 201.

In the circumstances this seemed sheer bravado. There could be no denying that Russian Social Democracy had suffered a serious setback. The arrests appeared to vindicate Cherevanin and others who had warned that it was still too early to consider calling a Party congress. The gathering had in fact been the work of a handful of intellectuals: only one of the nine participants, from the Jewish Bund, could claim to be of working-class origin. In many ways it set a bad precedent. Eydelman's attempts to conceal his intentions from his colleagues could not be explained solely by concern for security. Groups suspected of dissident opinions were deliberately excluded. Nor did the delegates themselves have the full backing of those they claimed to represent. I. V. Babushkin, a worker active as a propagandist at Yekaterinoslav, first learnt of the congress after it was over. There had been no previous discussion of it among the rank and file, he records, adding: 'All this left an unpleasant impression. It was clear to me that the intellectuals had made a mistake, and in sending a delegate from our city had acted wrongly and even criminally towards the workers.'¹ The outcome of the congress was precisely the reverse of that anticipated by some of its organizers. It discouraged efforts to bring about unity and strengthened the trend towards decentralization and local autonomy. It also contributed to the spread of the tendency loosely characterized by its opponents as 'Economism'. For the next few years the Party's history was largely one of sterile ideological debate.

With the collapse of the Minsk venture the centre of interest reverts to Western Europe, where the *émigrés* were at this time engrossed in abstruse theoretical disputation. The bitter polemics that were exchanged served as a smoke-screen to conceal what was essentially a struggle for power and influence between rival groups. It was a petty squabble in which none of those involved showed themselves to advantage. Yet it was of considerable significance. For the positions taken up by the contestants were later to become hardened and sanctified by tradition, until a myth grew up which, though it bore little relation to the facts at issue, was to exercise a hold over the imagination of millions. Moreover, it was in this factional conflict that a whole generation of leaders received their training, and Russian Social Democracy came to acquire some of its less attractive characteristics: a Byzantine capacity for intrigue, a fanatical intolerance towards heretical opinions, and a disposition to settle arguments by the use of force.

The trouble originated in Plekhanov's deliberate concentration on matters of abstract doctrine, to the neglect of practical questions affecting the movement in Russia. It was precisely such issues that were of

¹ *Pervyy s'yezd RSDRP* . . . , p. 184.

prime concern to the growing number of young radicals who emigrated to Western Europe during the 1890's. Many of them had some experience of clandestine activity as propagandists or agitators. By and large, however, they had a far from adequate grounding in Marxist theory, and this in Plekhanov's eyes was a grievous sin. As early as 1888 he had been obliged under pressure to agree to the formation of an organization known as the League of Russian Social Democrats Abroad. The Liberation of Labour group joined it as a corporate entity, with the right to edit its publications. In practice the new body scarcely existed except on paper. In 1894 Plekhanov and his friends, desperately short of funds, were forced to make further concessions, and to merge their group with the League. It was agreed that they should continue to exercise their editorial duties, which were broadened to include publication of a journal entitled *Rabotnik* ('The Worker'), as well as a series of leaflets designed to meet the growing demand within Russia for literature on current topics. The other members of the League were to perform auxiliary functions: raising funds, printing its publications, and transporting them by devious means to Russia. The arrangement did not work out satisfactorily. Plekhanov and Axelrod tactlessly insisted on exercising a virtual censorship over the League's leaflets, and took exception to some of the sentiments expressed in the manuscript material sent from Russia to be printed abroad. Kremer's pamphlet *On Agitation*, which proved so successful in Russia, had a cool reception from the *émigrés*. They published it only after repeated promptings, and then with an accompanying postscript in which Axelrod hinted darkly at the dangers of a revival of 'Bakuninism'. Such suspicions were quite unmerited. The leaflets appeared with decreasing regularity, and each successive issue of *Rabotnik* turned out to be bulkier than the last. The younger members of the League took the view that the founding fathers of Russian Marxism, for all their virtues, were lamentably out of touch with the needs of the times.¹

Plekhanov for his part thought it more vital than ever that he should man the ramparts of orthodoxy, since bands of rebels could now be discerned on the western horizon. The 'revisionist' tendency that was emerging in the German Social-Democratic Party threatened to destroy the theoretical edifice which it had been his life's work to build. Plekhanov's every instinct urged him to cling still more closely to his principles and to defend them with all the means at his command. He was one of the first Marxist writers with an international reputation—the others were A. L. Helphand (Parvus) and Rosa Luxemburg, both of whom had Russian backgrounds—to open fire on Eduard Bernstein

¹ *Otvet redaktsii 'Rabochego Dela' . . .* (Geneva, 1900), pp. 70–76; *Perepiska*, i. 27, 152–7.

for his rehabilitation of Kantian philosophy. By 1898 Plekhanov was already taking a sharper line against the revisionists than the acknowledged leader of the left-wing German Social Democrats, Karl Kautsky. He wrote an 'open letter' to Kautsky in which he roundly condemned the critics as creatures of the class enemy and proclaimed his faith that capitalism would soon be swept away by the impending economic crisis. At the Paris congress of the International in September 1900 Plekhanov emerged as spokesman for the extremists. He tabled a resolution re-affirming the necessity for a revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat. To his chagrin Kautsky substituted for it a less militant formula, which in Plekhanov's view obscured the essential differences between revolutionaries and reformists. Subsequently he proclaimed his regrets that Bernstein had not been expelled from the party. 'A party', he declared, 'is a voluntary association of men of like minds; as soon as there ceases to be unanimity of views, schism becomes inevitable. To force upon a party members who do not share its outlook is to limit its freedom of choice and to impede the success of its operations.'¹ It was therefore legitimate to restrict its members' liberty of expression.

This principle, he considered, was even more relevant to Russian conditions. When he discovered that the dreaded bacteria of revisionism had infected the League over which he presided, his indignation burst all bounds. Bernstein was after all a former pupil of Marx and Engels, and an experienced leader, even though his reputation was now tarnished. But the Russian critics of orthodoxy were men without international standing—intellectuals of unproven ability, who had allowed themselves to be carried away by the latest breeze of fashion from the West. In his eyes this was a revolt which had to be crushed by force—yet the means of coercion were lacking. The indignity of being forced on to the defensive by men whom he considered his inferiors gave him a feeling of helpless frustration, which his colleague Axelrod fully reciprocated.²

The principal object of their fury was S. N. Prokopovich, a trained economist who emigrated to Switzerland in 1896. He had at first impressed the Marxist leaders most favourably and had been admitted into their own intimate circle.³ He was ably assisted by his wife, E. D. Kuskova, who shared his political interests. Their lifelong partnership, unique in the annals of the Russian intelligentsia, has been aptly compared to that between Sidney and Beatrice Webb. The couple soon moved to Belgium, where Prokopovich undertook a first-

¹ *Plekhanov*, xii. 455; cf. pp. 103–16.

² *Perepiska*, ii. 22–23.

³ E. D. Kuskova, 'Davno minuvsheye', in *Novyy zhurnal* (1958), no. 54, p. 143; *Perepiska*, i. 175.

hand study of the local labour movement. He was particularly struck by the relatively strong mass support which Belgian labour organizations enjoyed and the emphasis they laid on constitutional methods of struggle. In a letter to Axelrod in the spring of 1898 he drew an unflattering comparison between Belgian and Russian socialism, and stated that neither he nor Kuskova could continue to accept the official programme of the Liberation of Labour group—as members of the League of Russian Social Democrats Abroad were bound to do.

Prokopovich's views had an attraction for some other members of this organization, notably T. Kopelson (Grishin), the official foreign representative of the Jewish Bund, who was irritated by Plekhanov's intransigence. The latter feared that Prokopovich would use his continued membership of the League to subvert it, and wished to have him formally expelled, but neither Axelrod nor Zasulich would agree to take such a radical step. Prokopovich for his part had no interest in seeking to win control of the organization, and was content to spread his influence through private contacts. By the autumn of 1898 the veterans were politically isolated. When the League held its first congress the rebels, who were in a majority, carried a motion admitting to membership two individuals, B. N. Krichevsky and P. F. Teplov, to whom Plekhanov and Axelrod took strong objection. They demonstrated their disapproval by renouncing their rights as editors of the League's publications, apparently in the hope that their withdrawal would demoralize their opponents. But the congress decided to launch a new journal, *Rabocheye Delo* ('The Workers' Cause') in place of the new defunct *Rabotnik*. This periodical, which was edited by Krichevsky, Teplov, and others, proved a greater success than any previous *émigré* publication, and the amount of material dispatched to Russia gradually increased.¹

By the following summer the situation had changed in Plekhanov's favour. Prokopovich and Kuskova left for Russia, where the former was promptly arrested. Kopelson saw the error of his ways and sought a compromise with the 'old guard'. But they were in no mood for agreement. On the contrary, it was at this moment that they decided to carry the dispute into print. They were motivated in part by a desire to exploit their advantage, and in part by a mistaken belief, due to a document known as the *Credo*,² that Prokopovich's ideas enjoyed widespread support in Russia, and that a determined campaign was necessary to combat them. Axelrod fired the first salvo, which was of

¹ MS minutes of first congress of the League, in Axelrod Archives, Amsterdam. The figures given by the League were 13 cwt. in 1899 and 19 cwt. in 1901. (*Rabocheye Delo* (1899), no. 2-3, p. 121; *Prot. II*, p. 688.

² See below, p. 65.)

modest calibre.¹ Three months later, in February 1900, Plekhanov exploded a literary bombshell. With the aid of a group of *émigré* Populists, who had a printing-press of their own, he issued a pamphlet entitled *A Vademecum for the Editors of 'Rabocheye Delo'*. This consisted in the main of excerpts from private letters written some months, or even years, earlier by Prokopovich, Kopelson, and others, which it was hoped would discredit them. This was an ethically dubious ruse, especially since Plekhanov was well aware that the opposition was cracking. It aroused a good deal of indignation in the self-contained *émigré* world. In April 1900, when the League held its second congress, partisans of the rival factions almost came to blows. Accompanied by a few loyal followers, Plekhanov walked out of the meeting and set up a new body, which he christened 'The Revolutionary Organization "Social-Democrat"'. It was in fact a revival of the Liberation of Labour group. In an announcement modelled on that which he had issued seventeen years earlier, when he had broken with the Populists, he solemnly declared that at the present juncture the main task facing Social Democracy was to combat the heresy of 'Economism'.²

But what *was* Economism? The answer seems to be: any idea that challenged the tenets of the 'old guard'. For the term was their invention; and like most such labels it did as much to obscure the real questions at issue as to clarify them. Plekhanov's tactics were to tar all his opponents with the same brush. He denounced them indiscriminately as revisionists and heretics. In fact there were several schools of thought within the League. It would be misleading to draw hard and fast lines between them, since all those concerned were inexperienced young enthusiasts whose political views were vague and flexible. It is nevertheless possible to distinguish between three main tendencies. One was represented by Prokopovich, Kuskova, and (for a time) Kopelson; another by Takhtarev and his associates, who edited a newspaper entitled *Rabochaya Mysl'* ('Workers' Thought'); and a third by the editors of *Rabocheye Delo*.

The only real Economists were Prokopovich and Kuskova.³ Their arguments were based on the premise that, judged by Western standards, the Russian workers were still politically immature. This was no reflection on their honour; it was a plain fact which it would be unwise

¹ P. B. Axelrod, *Pis'mo v redaktsiyu 'Rabochego Dela'* (Geneva, 1899).

² Plekhanov, xii. 103-16, 451-60, 517-22; *Perepiska*, ii. 217; Yu. M. Steklov, *Bortsy za sotsializm* (M.-Pg., 1923), ii. 217.

³ For their views, cf. the *Credo* (reprinted in V. Yudovsky (ed.), *Nashi protivniki* . . . M., 1928) and the letters published in Plekhanov's *Vademecum* . . . (Geneva, 1900), pp. 17ff., 37ff.; also S. N. Prokopovich, *Rabocheye dvizhenie na zapade* (Spb., 1899).

for the Party to ignore. This backwardness was primarily due to the heritage of absolutism: the lack of constitutional rights or democratic institutions hindered the mass of Russians from becoming properly aware of the value of political liberties. Nor did they have the traditions of organized association that had been built up by the artisans of Western Europe from medieval times onwards. Yet although it was extremely difficult to secure political reforms in an absolutist state, it was relatively easy to win economic improvements. The strikes of recent years had shown that the workers were eager to pursue the struggle against their employers. This gave the Social Democrats a promising field of activity. In present circumstances it was pointless for them to attempt to propagate socialism; indeed, this might even prove positively harmful, since it could provoke an elemental mass upheaval which the revolutionaries would find themselves unable to control. Russia needed, not a revolution, but a constitution. Although the Party leaders recognized in theory the need for political freedom, the tactics they were following were not calculated to help bring it about. Clandestine political propaganda could affect only a small minority of workers, and by adhering to such methods the Party would always remain an uninfluential sect. Instead, Marxist intellectuals should join with other political opponents of the autocracy, who were now beginning to make their voice heard, in working for a democratic constitutional order, and at the same time use whatever influence they had over the workers to encourage them to continue their struggle for economic ends. This would give them valuable experience in organized mass action and make them aware of the need for political liberty. Only then would the Party leaders be justified in approaching them with revolutionary slogans.

The influence of Bernstein on this programme was scarcely perceptible. Prokopovich and Kuskova were not particularly concerned about his theories, which were after all relevant to Germany rather than Russia. While they welcomed Bernstein's assault upon dogmatism, they disapproved of the despondent note struck in his writings. They retained the Russian intellectual's instinctive disdain for Western gradualism. This had nothing to do with their main argument, which was based on an analysis of social and political realities in Russia at the time.

Orthodox spokesmen were reluctant to face the Economists on this ground. It was easier to engage in calumny, and to repeat the old slogans, than to ascertain the actual extent to which Russian workers were already conscious of the need to wage a violent struggle against the régime. Critics of the *Credo* asserted blandly that 'the Russian labour movement and the Russian revolutionary movement are for us two

synonymous concepts'—as though their desires had become reality. They pointed to the dire implications of the Economist thesis: that the Party had at present no right to exist, and that the Social Democrats should merge in a common political front led by the liberals, leaving the workers to fight for purely economic objectives as best they could. From this it was but a step to the argument that the Economists were themselves willing or unwilling dupes of the class enemy, and were insidiously seeking to subvert the labour movement by depriving it of its authentic Marxist leadership and placing it under the control of the liberal bourgeoisie.

The Economists could truthfully reply that they were not traitors to socialism, and that they would be more than pleased if the workers followed a socialist rather than a liberal lead. The real point at issue was the method by which this desirable aim, shared by all, was to be attained. Might not the course of action proposed by the orthodox lead to the very results they feared? For by laying all the emphasis on long-term political objectives, to the neglect of the immediate improvements in industrial conditions which the workers themselves so eagerly desired, they might easily encourage them to look for leadership elsewhere. The success of Zubatov's police-sponsored labour unions was soon to show that this suggestion was by no means far-fetched.

A somewhat different stand from that of the Economists was taken by the editors of *Rabochaya Mysl'*. This clandestine newspaper was established in the autumn of 1897 as a private venture by Takhtarev, one of the leaders of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, and one year later became the official organ of that body. The first two issues were produced in Russia, but the editors then decided to safeguard their venture by emigrating abroad. *Rabochaya Mysl'* could lay no claim to journalistic excellence. It was designed as a paper written for and by the men themselves, and therefore incorporated a large amount of readers' correspondence and current news items, presented in an easily digestible form, and relatively little of the editorializing normally associated with Russian socialist publications. It set out to be 'a reflection of the life, thoughts and aspirations of the workers, . . . a creation of their mood'.¹ Little attention was paid to questions of doctrine. For this reason alone its editors were unlikely to agree with the intellectuals who had formulated the Economist heresy. Although Takhtarev was personally acquainted with Prokopovich, his views were derived mainly from his own experience as an activist in the St. Petersburg League. In the first issue of his paper he adopted a stridently anti-intellectual note. The labour movement, he warned, was doomed if it was content to remain 'merely a means of consoling the stricken consciences of

¹ *Rabochaya Mysl'* (1899), no. 5.

repentant intellectuals'.¹ They were unreliable champions of the people's cause: though today they might man the barricades, tomorrow they might well occupy the judges' seats. The Party established at Minsk was an artificial creation. It ought to be replaced by a broad-based and democratically controlled working-men's union. Some correspondents to the paper actually planned to set up such a body at a congress from which all intellectuals, however well-disposed, were to be excluded.²

Takhtarev did not, as his orthodox opponents persistently alleged, deny the need for a political struggle against the autocracy. But he did call for a re-examination of the means whereby such a struggle should be carried on. 'The whole trouble', he argued, 'is that our revolutionary intellectuals, mercilessly harried by the political police, have mistaken their fight against the latter for a political struggle against absolutism.' Such a struggle could be waged only by the masses themselves. Under the absolutist régime even a strike for economic ends was a revolutionary act, a threat to the existing order: 'the campaign for a law to limit the length of the working day is already a political struggle.' A reform such as this was merely the first step towards further concessions of a political character, such as the equality of all citizens before the law or a government responsible to the people.³

Takhtarev clearly took a grossly over-simplified view of the ease with which constitutional liberties might be won in Russia. He saw the working class as the only social group actively opposed to the régime: both the urban middle classes and the peasants seemed politically passive. He thought the autocracy was so isolated from the people that a show of force would suffice to bring it to its knees. His standpoint thus had a close affinity with that adopted by anarchists or syndicalists: like them he advocated direct mass action, was resolutely anti-bourgeois, and at times almost denied the need for political liberty altogether. Commenting upon an industrial dispute in Sweden in which strike-breakers had been involved, a correspondent to *Rabochaya Mysl'* roundly declared that 'in free parliamentary Sweden the government is just as much at the service of the possessing classes as it is in Russia'.⁴ Takhtarev himself might perhaps not have gone so far; but his line certainly did not lack militancy, and his critics were never further from the truth than when they charged him with moderate reformism. While he shared with the Economists a belief in the efficacy of industrial action, his position could scarcely have been further to the

¹ Ibid., (1897), no. 1 (reprinted in *Lenin*, ii, 611-12).

² Ibid., (1898), no. 3; (1900), no. 8.

³ Ibid., (1899), no. 6, appx. p. 13; no. 7; (1900), no. 10.

⁴ Ibid., (1899), no. 5.

left. Where he differed from the orthodox was in his concept of Party organization.

The third current of opinion within the *émigré* League, and the most influential, was represented by *Rabocheye Delo*. This was a more serious literary enterprise than Takhtarev's, and the views of its editors had a more solid theoretical foundation. A dispassionate examination of this periodical shows that, despite the angry allegations of the orthodox, its position had nothing in common with that of the Economists, and little with that of Takhtarev. Dealing with the vexed question of the relationship between the leaders and the rank and file, Teplov went out of his way to defend from criticism by *Rabochaya Mysl'* an incautious statement by an orthodox spokesman to the effect that the workers ought to submit to the guidance of the intellectuals.¹ Where Takhtarev had spoken vaguely of founding a labour union, the editors of *Rabocheye Delo* called on its readers to stand by the Party formally established at Minsk.² But they emphasized the need for democratic safeguards. The administrative practice of the League was exemplary in this respect: its executive was responsible to a plenary congress, which also appointed an 'inspectorate' to control the editorial policy of its organ.³ (The regard for democratic procedure was if anything somewhat excessive: members regularly received bulletins giving a blow-by-blow account of the political conflicts within the League.) Moreover, the leaders of the League regarded that organization simply as an agency of the R.S.D.R.P., with the task of rendering assistance to the groups working in Russia, and *Rabocheye Delo* as a conventional mouth-piece of Party opinion. Subsequently their rivalry with the ultra-centralist *Iskra* led Krichevsky and his colleagues to lay still greater stress on the necessity for the leaders to respect the views of the rank and file and to observe democratic procedures.

There was no truth in the accusation, repeatedly hurled at them by the orthodox, that the editors of *Rabocheye Delo* sought to minimize the importance of political action or to postpone it to the distant future. Every issue of the journal bore at its mast-head the Marxist slogan: 'The social emancipation of the working class is impossible without its political liberation.' In the spring of 1899 the League smuggled into Russia 1,200 copies of a May Day proclamation calling for political and civil liberties, as well as demands of purely immediate or local significance formulated by its correspondents on the spot. Its pamphlets continually stressed the point that a constitution was essential in order to ensure that the Government would not subsequently withdraw the

¹ *Rabocheye Delo* (1899), no. 4-5, p. 69.

² *Ibid.*, (1900), no. 8, pp. 15-20.

³ MS. minutes of first congress of the League, Bk. II, pp. 9-13.

concessions wrested from it.¹ When open political demonstrations took place the editors of the League's journal gave them a warm welcome. But in so doing they stressed that the crowds had been led to put forward political demands as a result of experience gained in the course of purely industrial disputes.² While they did not share Takhtarev's syndicalist view that any 'economic' strike was in itself a political act, they argued that one form of protest led automatically to the other. This might have been thought a fairly straightforward and elementary point—indeed, it had been made long ago in Kremer's pamphlet. But Krichevsky shared the fault, common among Marxist intellectuals, of elevating common-sense observations into abstract dogmas. He elaborated the simple notion that the labour movement developed gradually from one stage to another into a theory of the inevitability of gradualness. 'Economic struggle', he wrote, 'is the form initially taken by the mass movement and an irreplaceable school of political education.' The working class was made up of several strata, each at a different stage of political evolution, and 'political demands . . . must at first correspond to the experience gained from economic struggle by the stratum concerned'. The Social Democrats should 'start from the beginning' and observe 'gradualness in their work of agitation'.³ He later explained that this was designed simply as 'a pedagogic approach', and protested that he was innocent of the charge of 'opportunism', since he did not seek to conceal the final end of the process. But the very word 'gradualness' sent the orthodox into fits of indignation. They angrily accused *Rabocheye Delo* of cutting down the scope of the movement to suit the more backward workers. Plekhanov agreed that the various strata within the working class had attained different levels of 'consciousness', as he termed it, but drew the conclusion that the Party should seek to represent only the most advanced stratum.⁴ This was a doctrine that paved the way for Lenin's later exaltation of the Party as an organization of the 'conscious' *élite*.

Krichevsky was also taxed with concentrating his attention exclusively upon the narrower issues of the conflict between labour and capital, and ignoring the 'democratic' tasks that faced the Russian working class. In fact *Rabocheye Delo* made every effort to interest its readers in wider questions. It published a number of articles dealing with foreign affairs, economic policy, education, the *zemstva* and other topics of general interest. A. S. Pikker (Martynov), one of the editors, criticized the extremist view of *Rabochaya Mysl'* that the middle classes were a

¹ *Rabocheye Delo* (1899), no. 2-3, pp. 24-25; *Russkiy politicheskiy stroy i rabochiye* (Geneva, 1901), p. 21; *Pervoye maya 1901* (1902) g. (Geneva, 1901 (1902)).

² *Ibid.*, (1899), no. 2-3, p. 23; (1901), no. 9, p. 75.

³ *Ibid.*, (1900), no. 7, pp. 5, 10-11.

⁴ *Plekhanov*, xii. 90-91.

negligible quantity, and urged workers to participate actively in manifestations of political opposition by members of educated society (an idea that was to be taken up by Axelrod some years later).¹ Towards the peasants, it is true, his attitude was more negative: he spoke of 'neutralizing' them, and declared that 'we know very well how slight the chances are of bringing about a broad-based political movement amongst the peasant millions'.² But here he was merely following the view propounded by Plekhanov since the early 1890's. Finally it may be noted that the editors of *Rabocheye Delo* paid homage to the orthodox concept of 'hegemony', although they rejected the fantastic construction put upon this notion by *Iskra*.

It may thus be said that in all essential respects the views expressed in the League's official organ corresponded to those propagated by Plekhanov and Axelrod while it was under their control—views to which they gradually reverted after their breach with Lenin in 1903. The argument about the proper relationship of the economic to the political struggle was inflated to ridiculous proportions. The League was never an Economist organization: Prokopovich exercised only a slight influence upon *Rabochaya Mysl'*, and none at all upon *Rabocheye Delo*.

Nor were sympathies for Bernstein's views widespread or firmly implanted in the minds of members of the League—despite a claim to this effect by the revisionist leader himself,³ which was received by the orthodox with a great deal of indignant alarm. An examination of the manuscript records of the first congress of the League in November 1898 shows that the man most compromised in this respect was M. I. Peskin (Somov), who declared that 'now, of course, in the light of Bernstein's views, the Social-Democratic programme must be interpreted in the broadest sense'.⁴ But Peskin did not hold any position of authority. None of the editors-to-be of *Rabocheye Delo* spoke on this issue. They may well have agreed with Kopelson, who remarked that 'if a supporter of Bernstein wishes to examine the Russian scene from his point of view, we ought to allow him to do so, for otherwise we shall become set in our ideas; only by a continual exchange of opinions can we move forward'.⁵ One of the next issues of the journal contained an announcement of the forthcoming publication of a collection of articles translated from German setting out the case for and against the

¹ *Rabocheye Delo*, (1901), no. 9, pp. 55–66; no. 11, appx., p. 30; cf. below, p. 185.

² *Ibid.*, (1901), no. 10, p. 58; (1902), no. 11–12, p. 42.

³ E. Bernstein, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (Stuttgart, 1899), p. 170.

⁴ MS. of first congress of the League (Axelrod Archives), Bk. I, p. 28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

revisionists; but this never saw the light of day.¹ The initial readiness of some members of the League to keep an open mind on the question did not last long; and Kopelson himself soon became an eager advocate of compromise with the orthodox. Nevertheless both Plekhanov and later Lenin portrayed the League as thoroughly riddled with the German heresy.

The outcry raised about the dangers of revisionism was all the more reprehensible in the light of the fact that the orthodox leaders themselves, as is clear from subsequently published correspondence, were not immune to the same temptations. Axelrod wrote privately that in his opinion Bernstein's followers 'have no less right to exist than the ultra-revolutionaries: the whole thing is a matter of temperament'. He admitted that the reformist road to socialism 'even has some advantage over the methods of *Sturm und Drang*: at least it will cost less blood'. The main point against it was that it would be exceedingly boring.² Thus Bernstein was justified in telling Kautsky that Axelrod was at heart on his side, and that only the thought of their long comradeship prevented him tearing himself away from Plekhanov.³ Even Plekhanov admitted to his friend that 'the most vexing thing is that Bernstein is right in some matters: for instance, it is of course impossible to reckon with an early realization of the socialist ideal'. Significantly, it was the element of 'bourgeois philistinism' (*meshchanstvo*) in Bernstein's ideas to which Plekhanov—in this respect a typical Russian radical intellectual—chiefly took exception.⁴

In conclusion it may be said that the anti-Economist campaign had all the elements of a witch-hunt. It was launched only when it had ceased to be necessary. It was designed to disorientate and discredit the opposition by subjecting them to a barrage of propaganda and calumny. The vacillating elements were identified with the extremists in an effort to force them into repudiating the connexion. In this respect the so-called *Credo* played a key role. This was a summary of an address given by Kuskova to a clandestine meeting in St. Petersburg, compiled hastily at the request of some members of the audience, who then appropriated and circulated it without informing its author.⁵ It was later published abroad—characteristically, in the League's organ—together with a protest by seventeen orthodox leaders, among them Lenin, from their places of exile. The editors of *Rabocheye Delo* tried to put this document in perspective by pointing out that the *Credo* embodied the opinions of a mere handful of individuals (in fact, of Kuskova alone, since her husband was at this time under arrest, and it is doubtful

¹ *Rabocheye Delo* (1899), no. 4-5, p. 89.

² *Perepiska*, i. 195.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. 65.

⁴ *Ibid.*, i. 189, 201.

⁵ E. D. Kuskova, in *Byloye* (1906), no. 10, pp. 325-6.

whether it even expressed her views with complete accuracy). A man as moderate as Tugan-Baranovsky criticized it as 'a complete renunciation of Marxism'.¹ But for the orthodox the *Credo* served as a peg on which to hang all their arguments about the dangers of nonconformity. They interpreted it as a document of the most profound importance, a virtual manifesto of Economism. They succeeded so well that to this day it is generally believed that the Economists were counter-revolutionary reformists.

It is ironical to reflect that, even if the views expressed in the *Credo* had been widely current among Russian Marxists, this would have posed no serious threat to the position of the orthodox. For German revisionism was an alien plant which could not take root in Russian soil. Bernstein appealed to men's reason, to the logic of historical evidence. But the Russian intellectuals were in no mood for such an approach. Their radicalism was instinctive and emotional; even the reformists among them remained rebels at heart. In Russia this was still an age of revolutionary faith, and the cold scepticism of the West could make little impression.

The real danger to orthodox Marxism, as the future was to show, came from the left—from the latent tendencies towards anarchism among the masses and towards authoritarianism among the radical intelligentsia. Those who made it their aim to crush heresy at any cost, and to bring the entire opposition movement under their own control, posed a dual threat: to Marxists who sought to use the doctrine as a rational means of analysing the changes taking place in Russian society, and to the inarticulate masses who strove to form a genuinely democratic labour party. The reaction against Economism drove the orthodox into excesses that were to leave Russian Social Democracy permanently disfigured.

¹ A. N. Potresov and B. I. Nikolaevsky, op. cit., p. 38.

III

THE BIRTH OF BOLSHEVISM

ALL Russian radicals were agreed that the press was the most effective means of projecting their influence, both in educated society and among the population at large. The illiterate could be reached indirectly, through students and 'advanced' workers eager to help spread the gospel of revolution. The main difficulties were practical. Periodicals published with the sanction of the authorities could not reach a very wide public, and as the century drew to a close the censors showed signs of abandoning their previous relative laxity.¹ The establishment of a clandestine printing-press was a formidable task. The equipment could be obtained by devious means, but as soon as its products began to circulate the police were alerted, and discovery soon followed. Journals published abroad were hampered by distance. Comment on current news tended to be out of date by the time it reached the readers for whom it was designed. Nevertheless the Social-Democratic leaders took it for granted that a periodical of this type could play a vital role in reviving the shattered Party and consolidating its influence.

No one realized this more clearly than Lenin, whose ideas were enthusiastically endorsed by two colleagues from the early days of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle, Martov and Potresov. All three men were now approaching the end of their terms of exile. As their plans took concrete shape they became ever more ambitious in scope. The paper was to be run with covert assistance from the German Social Democrats, financial support being provided by wealthy sympathizers in Russia. The *émigré* veterans were to be invited to collaborate, to ensure that its ideological line should be impeccably orthodox. A team of agents experienced in the arts of the underground were to introduce issues of the paper into Russia and distribute them to the scattered local committees. These agents would be well placed to help the latter co-ordinate their activities and persuade them to accept the orthodox point of view. Ultimately, once the heretics had been routed, a national congress would be called to consummate the new unity that had been achieved, and the R.S.D.R.P. would arise, phoenix-like, from its ashes, mightier than it had been before. Not only would it command the allegiance of the urban masses: it would attract to its banner all who

¹ On the *Nachalo* affair, cf. R. Kindersley, *The first Russian Revisionists* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 92ff., 242.

opposed the autocracy, regardless of their social status or political orientation, and lead them in a titanic onslaught upon the strongholds of reaction. It was an imaginative and somewhat daunting prospect.

The name chosen for the paper, *Iskra* ('The Spark'), and its device—the words of one of the Decembrists to Pushkin: 'From the spark shall grow the flame'—signalized its founders' confidence in the imminence of revolution and the role which they themselves expected to play in it. They purposely chose a title devoid of the usual narrow proletarian connotations, lest this deter potential liberal supporters. *Iskra* was not to be simply the mouthpiece of a single party: it was to voice the sentiments of the entire people—to emulate the role of Herzen's *Kolokol* forty years before. Non-Marxists were invited to contribute to its columns, so long as they accepted the editors' right to criticize their opinions from an orthodox Marxist standpoint.

But was it psychologically tolerable for men of differing political persuasions to collaborate on such terms? The problem made itself felt almost at once. The door that gave access to liberal 'society' was guarded by the controversial Peter Struve, on whom Lenin and his friends looked with growing suspicion. After composing the manifesto for the Party's first congress he had moved further to the right. He had publicly questioned the doctrines of the increasing impoverishment of the proletariat and the historical inevitability of revolution. In April 1900 a meeting was arranged at Pskov between the three returned exiles and the three leading Legal Marxists—Struve, Tugan-Baranovsky and V. Ya. Bogucharsky. Martov, who had expected to be received 'with fixed bayonets', was surprised to find them sympathetic to their plans. They were even willing to recognize Lenin and his associates as the leaders of Russian Social Democracy. Without great difficulty an agreement was reached on the form of their future collaboration with *Iskra*.¹

Leaving Martov in Russia for a few months to make contact with some of the local committees, Lenin and Potresov set out for Geneva. Here they unexpectedly encountered opposition to their designs from Plekhanov, whose goodwill they had taken for granted. He was implacably opposed to any collaboration with the 'renegade' Struve, but had

¹ Yu. O. Martov, 'Iz neopublikovannykh vospominaniy', in *Leninskiy sbornik* (1925), iv. 55–57; *Lenin*, iv. 551–4; P. B. Struve, 'My contacts and conflicts with Lenin', *Slav. and E. Europ. Rev.* (1934–5), xiii. 75. There were some characteristic differences between the future editors in their approach to this agreement. Potresov warmly welcomed it. Martov, loyal to principle but oblivious of practical realities, accepted it only with reluctance, fearing that it might handicap their freedom to express their orthodox views. Lenin demonstrated his flair for deriving tactical advantage from any situation. He was confident that any deviation by Struve from the proper path could be checked 'so long as we keep a stone in our sling'.

no alternative suggestions to offer as regards the financing of the enterprise. An 'atmosphere of ultimatums' soon developed. To the aspiring editors of *Iskra* it appeared as though Plekhanov were determined to foredoom their project unless he could direct it himself. At one point they were on the verge of abandoning it in despair. Lenin complained privately of Plekhanov's 'phenomenal intolerance' and criticized his clumsy handling of the dispute with the *émigré* League. Finally, through the mediation of Zasulich, a compromise was reached. Plekhanov was to be given an additional casting-vote on the six-man editorial board of *Iskra*; but the paper was to be produced by Lenin's team in Munich, while Plekhanov and Axelrod would continue to live in Switzerland, and Zasulich in England. This curious arrangement deprived the veterans' majority on the board of real significance and limited the extent of the influence that they could exert on the policy of the paper. Lenin at any rate was now determined to reduce their participation to a minimum: 'We do not think it possible to carry on without Plekhanov and the Liberation of Labour group,' he explained to a correspondent, 'but from this no one should conclude that we shall yield the slightest fraction of our independence.'¹ He took satisfaction in the thought that most of Plekhanov's energies would be absorbed by his work on *Zarya* ('Dawn'), a 'solid' journal in the traditions of the intelligentsia, which was to be the ideological complement to *Iskra*. In the event the bulk of the editorial work was performed by the trio of younger men, in the first instance by Lenin. By no means the least important result of the clash was its psychological effect on the future Bolshevik leader. The man who not long before had proudly declared: 'I am not only an orthodox but also a Plekhanovite'² now became bitterly disillusioned in his old teacher. He came to feel that he himself, despite his relative inexperience, possessed the qualities of leadership necessary to guide the fortunes of the infant Party. Henceforth, while remaining outwardly loyal to the collective, he was to pursue an increasingly independent and self-confident line of his own.³

The first issue of *Iskra* appeared in December 1900. One month later the editors held one of their infrequent conferences (most of their work had to be done by correspondence) to decide how they were to implement their agreement with Struve. The roles they had played at their first meeting in September were now reversed. In the meantime Plekhanov had become convinced that collaboration with Struve was

¹ *Lenin*, xxviii. 58.

² *Gruppa 'Osvobozhdenie Truda': iz arkhivov G. V. Plekhanova, V. I. Zasulichy i L. G. Deycha* (M.-Lg., 1924-6), vi. 250.

³ B. D. Wolfe, *Three who made a revolution* (N.Y., 1948), p. 151. On the negotiations, see Lenin's revealing memorandum, 'How the Spark Nearly Went Out', in *Sochineniya*, iv. 19ff.

an unavoidable necessity. Viewed through the prism of dogma, he appeared in Plekhanov's eyes as the living embodiment of 'bourgeois democracy', the abstract force that was axiomatically the temporary ally of the Social Democrats. Supported by Potresov and Zasulich, he recommended that Struve should be invited to provide a supplement to *Iskra*, to be known as *Sovremennoye Obozrenie* ('The Contemporary Review'), in which he was to concern himself exclusively with the affairs of the class he supposedly represented. Lenin realized that within a short time such a supplement would probably become an independent organ, overshadowing the paper to which it was nominally attached. With characteristic abruptness he decided that the alliance with Struve had outlived its usefulness. The grudging toleration he had extended to his former colleague in the struggle against Populism now gave way to a feeling of bitter hatred. Henceforth he regarded him as a renegade, and 'Struivist' became a common epithet in his pejorative vocabulary. Not suprisingly, the negotiations led nowhere. Shortly afterwards Struve returned to St. Petersburg, where he took part in a student demonstration and was arrested. The breach gave a foretaste of the difficulties that were continually to plague the Social Democrats in their dealings with the liberal opposition.

Meanwhile in Russia the storm-clouds were gathering. All sections of the population began to voice their disaffection—at first timorously, and then with greater assurance. The lead, naturally enough, was given by the students. The furious public controversies between Marxists and Populists had heightened their political awareness, and the atmosphere in the universities was electric. It was characteristic that students would sometimes meet in their professors' homes to discuss current social problems and that the proceedings should end with the communal singing of revolutionary songs.¹ Resentment against arbitrary actions by the university authorities often took a more violent form. Particularly serious disturbances broke out at St. Petersburg University in February 1899, which the police quelled by bringing their whips into play. All over Russia students ceased work in protest. The affair was examined by an official commission, but little was done to ease the tension. Instead, the Government tightened the screw by issuing new provisional regulations which provided for the assignment of insubordinate students to disciplinary battalions in the army. In the autumn of the following year this harsh penalty was imposed upon 183 students from Kiev and 30 from St. Petersburg who had infringed the law. A new wave of disturbances ensued, which culminated in the

¹ E. Broydo, in *Letopis' revolyutsii* (Berlin-M., 1923), no. 1, p. 128. For a non-Marxist view, see V. M. Chernov, *Pered burey* (N.Y., 1953), pp. 55ff.

assassination of the Minister of Education, N. P. Bogolepov, and public demonstrations in St. Petersburg and Moscow (February–March 1901). These were the first demonstrations of any size to occur in Russia. They provoked a correspondingly sharp reaction from the cossack security troops, and a number of people, mainly intellectuals, were brutally manhandled. This in turn made a considerable impact on public opinion, and the Government thought it wiser to modify its policy. Bogolepov's successor, General A. A. Vannovsky, announced that he would be guided by 'sincere solicitude' in his relations with the student body. But the pacification he brought about did not last for long.

In St. Petersburg and some other towns, notably Kharkov, student demonstrators obtained a modicum of working-class support. A new round of industrial trouble was now beginning. It had its origin in the depressed conditions in the metallurgical industries of the Ukraine. The unrest sometimes acquired a political character. In May 1900 several thousand men marched in procession through the streets of Kharkov. The slogans on their banners included demands for civil rights as well as for an eight-hour day. The police, taken by surprise, did not intervene, and the incident remained a more or less isolated phenomenon. In August there was a two-week strike by the railwaymen of Tiflis, partly under the influence of revolutionary agitation, which gave an impetus to the spread of disaffection throughout Transcaucasia. The spring fever of 1901 touched off demonstrations in several cities to mark International Labour Day. At the Obukhov armaments factory near St. Petersburg a pitched battle took place shortly afterwards between strikers and police, reinforced by troops; there were many arrests, and thirty-seven men were sent for trial.¹ In the capital minor disturbances continued at intervals throughout the summer. The trouble spread to the Moscow area, and then to more outlying regions. There was bloodshed at Batum in March 1902, when troops clashed with a crowd of oil-workers, most of them Georgians, who were protesting against the receipt of dismissal notices. At least fourteen men were killed and about eighty were injured.² May Day that year was celebrated on a more extensive scale than before, with meetings and processions in thirty-six towns. More and more frequently strikes were now giving place to political demonstrations, which implied a greater degree of organized control. The authorities were often caught unawares by these new developments. At Rostov-on-Don in November

¹ *Obukhovtsy* (Geneva, 1901); *Sudebnyy prigovor po delu obukhovtsev* (Geneva, 1902).

² *Batumskaya boynya: obvinitel'nyy akt* (n.p., 1902); F. E. Makharadze and G. V. Khachapuridze, *Ocherki po istorii rabocheho i krest'yanskogo dvizheniya v Gruzii* (M., 1932), pp. 98, 181. It was in this affray that the young Stalin made his revolutionary début.

1902, anxious to calm the anger aroused in the city by their brutal treatment of a young woman railway-worker, the police permitted thousands of her comrades to hold daily mass meetings, at which orators from various revolutionary groups delivered inflammatory harangues. This was the first time that the Social Democrats were able to exercise any significant influence in a major local disturbance. For the most part the leaders in the protest marches and demonstrations were young men who had no close connexion with any clandestine organization. In the winter of 1902-3 the movement showed signs of subsiding. Serious trouble was confined to the remoter areas. The worst incident took place at Zlatoust in the Urals, where sixty-nine miners are believed to have been killed when troops opened fire on a threatening crowd. The governor, N. M. Bogdanovich, who gave the order to shoot, was later assassinated. The Ukraine still remained a dangerous storm-centre. A strike which broke out in Odessa in July 1903 soon spread throughout the city, and then to all the more important towns in the south of European Russia. The repressive measures taken against non-Russian minorities by the new Minister of the Interior, V. K. Plehve, made the situation in this region particularly explosive.¹

Although these labour disturbances presented several novel features which gave the Government ample cause for alarm, they could be contained without undue difficulty, and the police evolved fresh techniques for dealing with the problems that confronted them.² A greater potential menace to the stability of the régime was the unrest among the peasants in the overpopulated black-earth belt, and the repercussions which these had on the upper echelons of Russian society. The first rumblings could already be heard of the storm that was to burst over rural Russia three years later. In the spring of 1902 serious rioting occurred in the provinces of Poltava and Kharkov. On Plehve's instructions the law-breakers were whipped into submission and required to compensate the landowners for the damage done to their property. A purely negative policy of repression was clearly inadequate. Already in January 1902 Witte had obtained the Tsar's consent to his plan to hold a 'Special Conference' on the needs of agriculture, which he hoped would lead to a radical improvement in the peasants' economic and juridical position. Unlike previous official commissions, this conference was conceived on a grandiose scale. Hundreds of local committees were formed, and prominent local men invited to join them. Their deliberations gave Russian liberals a valuable opportunity to formulate their views on practical problems and to rally their scattered

¹ P. S. Gusyatnikov, *Nazrevanie revolyutsionnogo krizisa v Rossii v nachale XX-go veka* (M., 1959), pp. 49ff.; L. Martov, *Proletarskaya bor'ba v Rossii* (Spb., 1906); *Vseobshchaya stachka na yuge Rossii 1903 g.* (M., 1938).

² See below, p. 102.

forces around a common programme. In May 1902 sixty *zemstvo* representatives met privately and reached agreement on the principles that were to guide them in the committee discussions. This was a notable step forward. For many years Russian liberals had acknowledged the leadership of D. N. Shipov, a wealthy landowner of cautious temperament, whose chief concern had been to avoid any action that might undermine the standing of the *zemstva* with the Government. His position was now gradually weakened, and power shifted to a more radical group, which included among its members both experienced *zemstvo* leaders, such as I. I. Petrunkevich and Prince A. M. Shakhovskoy, and intellectuals, such as P. N. Milyukov and the ubiquitous Struve. Already in 1901 Struve had become a centre of attention in *zemstvo* circles. By a remarkable journalistic *coup* he obtained and published a confidential memorandum submitted to the Tsar by Witte, in which the latter set forth his view—one that he was to re-assert on several subsequent occasions—that the *zemstva* were incompatible with the maintenance of autocracy. Witte's arguments, couched in Delphic language, could be interpreted either as a plea for reform or as a recommendation that the *zemstva* be suppressed. Many liberals took the latter view, which seemed to be corroborated by the restrictions recently placed by the Government on many aspects of *zemstvo* work. They responded sympathetically to Struve's appeal, in the foreword to this document, for the formation of a political party devoted to the cause of constitutional progress. When the radical leaders decided, in the spring of 1902, to launch a clandestine newspaper, as a preparatory step to the realization of this goal, Struve was a natural candidate for the post of editor. *Osvobozhdenie* ('Liberation'), as the paper was called, began to appear in July 1902. Like *Iskra*, it was published abroad and distributed in Russia by groups of sympathizers. From the first its editorials urged the necessity for a resolute struggle against the existing régime. The collaborationist tendency represented by those contributors who referred to themselves as the 'Old *Zemstvo* Men' was sharply criticized. Struve did not come out with a straightforward call for constitutional government, preferring to speak of the need for 'rights and an omnipotent all-Russian *zemstvo*', but politically he was far ahead of the majority of his readers and camouflage was essential. After a few months he could openly demand a constituent assembly based on universal suffrage, as well as far-reaching social and agrarian reforms. In the tactical sphere *Osvobozhdenie* advocated collaboration with the Social Democrats. It was instrumental in pressing the *zemstvo* movement further to the left. In the autumn of 1902 a number of local assemblies discussed political questions and passed resolutions critical of the Government. Plehve

responded with a miscellaneous assortment of reforms, announced in an Imperial manifesto on 26 February 1903. But these fell flat. Instead of the reconciliation between 'authority' and 'society' to which the conservatives looked forward, the two camps drifted further apart. In July 1903 the liberals took another major step forward by creating the nucleus of a clandestine political party, the Liberation League (*Soyuz Osvobozhdeniya*).¹

Meanwhile the peasant disorders had given fresh impetus to the Populist renaissance that had begun in 1901, when two of their organizations, one centred on Moscow and the other in the Ukraine, merged to form the 'Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries' ('S.R.s'). It was an amorphous body, which had neither strict disciplinary control over its members nor a clearly-defined ideological line. It sheltered under its wing several semi-autonomous groups. One of these, the *émigré* Agrarian Socialist League, compiled pamphlet literature for distribution by party members and sympathizers among the peasants—particularly in the central Volga area and the black-earth belt, where the S.R.s had most support. More spectacular, but possibly less significant, was the so-called 'Fighting Organization', which carried on terrorist activities against prominent officials. It was this band of men, led by G. Gershuni and later by the notorious *agent provocateur* E. Azef, who were responsible for the assassination of Bogolepov in 1901 and the Minister of the Interior, D. S. Sipyagin, in April 1902.

The ideology of twentieth-century Populism was mainly the work of V. M. Chernov, who was the principal editor of the party's newspaper *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* ('Revolutionary Russia').² He combined traditional *narodnik* ideas with elements of Marxism, in its reformist as well as in its orthodox version. From Mikhaylovsky and his associates Chernov inherited the basic Populist philosophy, with its emphasis on the value of the human personality and its belief that the individual will could triumph over blind historical forces. He shared their implicit faith in peasant virtue and capitalist wickedness, as well as their sense of Russia's unique destiny. From Marx he borrowed the notion of class struggle, although in a modified form. In his eyes it was a conflict, not between proletarians and bourgeois, but between 'toilers' and 'exploiters', between those who earned their daily bread and those who profited by the labour of their fellow men. The 'toiling class' included peasants as well as industrial workers. The differences between men who belonged to these two social categories, he argued, were relatively

¹ G. Fischer, *Russian liberalism . . .* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 125ff.; D. N. Shipov, *Vospominaniya i dumy* (M., 1918), pp. 131ff.; A. A. Kizevetter, pp. 333, 340-4; *OD*, i. 385-98.

² O. H. Radkey, *The agrarian foes of Bolshevism* (N.Y., 1958), pp. 3-46; N. Sukhanov, *Nashi napravleniya* (Pg., 1917); *OD*, iii. 89-95; i. 414-21.

unimportant, for all of them reacted to the common phenomenon of exploitation in the same instinctive way. The S.R.s wished to forge the closest possible ties between workers in town and country. They actually extolled that intermediate figure, half a peasant and half a proletarian, whose survival in Russia was a source of some embarrassment to the Marxists.¹ The third element in the Populists' revolutionary triad was the 'toiling intelligentsia'—those members of the educated class with the courage to dissociate themselves from their native milieu and throw in their lot with the people. They challenged the Marxist assertion that the intelligentsia was simply a constituent part of a larger grouping, the 'bourgeoisie': it was 'a group of individuals who have transcended class barriers, and are bound together by a common conviction'. They were frankly prepared to assign it a position of political pre-eminence: to it fell 'the task of synthesizing all active forces . . . into a social revolutionary party'.² Yet however highly the Populists exalted the role of the intelligentsia, they retained their traditional agrarian bias: it was their uninhibited championship of the peasant cause that principally distinguished them from their fellow-socialists in the Marxist camp.

Chernov looked forward to a great agrarian upheaval that would enable the peasants to realize their supposedly collectivist ideals. Having deprived the gentry of their estates, the peasants would be content for the land to be 'socialized'. By this rather nebulous term he meant that it would be removed from commercial circulation and handed over for use to those who worked it. The peasants would in practice continue to farm the land either as petty proprietors or as members of voluntary co-operatives. From time to time the local organs of State power, backed by the poorer elements in the community, would intervene to check the natural growth of social inequality by carrying out a re-allotment, much as communes at present re-apportioned the village lands among householders. Meanwhile industry was to remain under private control. The position of the capitalist entrepreneur would, however, be weakened by the enforcement of progressive labour legislation and other social reforms. The influence exerted on the economy as a whole by its 'socialized' agrarian sector would become steadily more decisive until the final goal, a fully socialist society, was achieved.

At the time the details of this scheme were not entirely clear even to Chernov himself, let alone to all his followers. Many points were deliberately left obscure. Although much of the S.R. doctrine was utopian in the extreme, particularly where their ultimate aims were

¹ S. Grigorovich, *Sotsializm i bor'ba za politicheskuyu svobodu* (London, 1898), p. 106.

² *Vestnik russkoy revolyutsii* (1902), no. 2, pp. 218, 227.

concerned, their conception of immediate realities was in many ways more reasonable than that of the Social Democrats. Their ideas were certainly better suited to the problem of bringing about revolution in a backward agrarian country. Their activist philosophy and relatively flexible approach gave them an edge over their Marxist rivals, and the latter, as we shall see, proved susceptible to their influence.

The emergence of these new forces on the political scene was greeted by the editors of *Iskra* with mixed feelings. While welcoming the contribution the liberals and Populists could make to the common struggle against absolutism, they did not wish them to seize the leadership role they had earmarked for themselves. So long as they were weak, they were treated by Social-Democratic spokesmen with indifference or contempt. As their strength grew, they became objects of jealousy, until finally the Marxists' outlook came to be governed by anxious fears for their own supremacy. The old concept of 'hegemony' was now given a new look. When first developed by Axelrod, it had been applied to the relations between social classes at the moment of revolution. Now it was applied to the relations between the political groups that were deemed to represent those classes, in the present rather than in the future. In other words, *Iskra* was to exercise dominion over all the other opposition groups. But these had now evolved political philosophies of their own. They could feel the ground swell of popular discontent rising beneath them, and were naturally encouraged to resist the Marxists' pretensions. In the 1890's, during a period of relative tranquillity, it had been possible for one intellectual tendency to prevail over the rest. But the discussion circles of St. Petersburg had now given way to a nation-wide forum, in which all the embryonic political parties were free to compete. To maintain their 'hegemony' in such circumstances demanded a capacity for subtle manoeuvre denied them by their dogmatic commitment.

Particularly galling to the editors of *Iskra* was Struve's re-appearance in charge of *Osvobozhdenie*. On hearing of the new enterprise Potresov confidently remarked that 'it is hardly likely to turn into anything very grand'.¹ To Lenin it must have seemed as though his worst fears were about to be realized: not only might *Osvobozhdenie* mobilize the forces of Russian society under its own banner; it might send bourgeois generals to take command of the proletarian armies, thereby depriving Social Democracy of its *raison d'être*. Already in the summer of 1901 he sharply condemned the line taken by Struve in his foreword to Witte's memorandum, adopting a tone so intemperate that his editorial colleagues raised objections.² With the appearance of *Osvobozhdenie*

¹ *Leninskiy sbornik* (1925), iv. 102.

² See below, p. 112.

his attitude hardened into one of uncompromising hostility. He still clung to the idea that the bourgeois opposition deserved the Social Democrats' support. As he put it, they 'must learn to catch each liberal at the moment when he is prepared to move forward an inch and make him move forward a yard'.¹ But how was this principle to be realized? *Iskra's* strategy was to interest its working-class readers in the broader aspects of the struggle against absolutism and at the same time, secure in the knowledge that its line enjoyed popular support, drive the moderates to the left by pungent criticism. In pursuit of this objective the editors filled its columns with material dealing with political events far removed from the narrow sphere of the conflict between labour and capital. Plekhanov went so far in his zeal as to declare that 'the political maturity of the working class will be measured to a significant extent by the degree of its sympathy for every progressive movement directed against the existing order'. Lenin wrote that 'he who directs the attention of the working class exclusively or even predominantly upon itself is no Social Democrat'.² But the net effect of this policy was very different from that intended.

In practice *Iskra* applauded the more timid liberals but criticized the radicals, while its proletarian readers looked on in baffled astonishment. It hailed an aristocrat, Prince Stakhovich, who had been reprimanded by the Tsar for publicly advocating religious toleration.³ When some statisticians employed by the Yekaterinoslav *zemstvo* were arbitrarily dismissed, it called for their reinstatement.⁴ But simultaneously it carried on a fierce polemic against Struve's *Osvobozhdenie*, which was said to be working, not for a resolute struggle against absolutism, but for an agreement with the Government at the people's expense.⁵ For this strange attitude there could be but one possible explanation: that from *Iskra's* point of view the only good liberal was one who was willing to accept the Social Democrats' lead. They feared and hated the radicals because they might attract the allegiance of moderate elements which could otherwise have gravitated under the influence of the extreme left. The criterion that determined the amount of support given to the non-socialist opposition was not so much the radicalism of the views expressed as the degree of susceptibility to extraneous control. In this *Iskra's* policy was that of Lenin, who had made his attitude abundantly clear in a letter to Potresov in 1899:

Our problem . . . is to free progressive tendencies of every kind from the rubbish of Populism and agrarianism, and in this purified form to utilize them all. I think 'to utilize' is a much more accurate and appropriate

¹ *Lenin*, iv. 357. ² *Plekhanov*, xii. 157; *Lenin*, iv. 415. ³ *Lenin*, iv. 354.

⁴ *Iskra*, no. 7 (August 1901). ⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 23 (1 August 1902).

word than 'to support' or 'to ally with'. The latter terms give the impression of equality between allies, whereas they ought to follow along in the rear . . . , sometimes even with clenched teeth, as it were . . .¹

This tactical principle was to be applied to good effect by Lenin's followers in later years. In these early days the Bolshevik leader still lacked the experience in the arts of dissimulation he was eventually to acquire. *Iskra's* irreconcilable attitude made little or no impact on the orientation of Russian liberalism. If anything, the sterile polemic against *Osvobozhdenie* helped to enhance the latter's prestige. The futility of *Iskra's* policy led to criticism from among its supporters. As one correspondent put it: 'We are in a curious position. As the vanguard, we call upon all who are disaffected to follow us, but at every appropriate and inappropriate moment we proceed to hurl abuse at our rearguard.'² Few Social Democrats, however, were acute enough to realize the full implications of the dilemma with which they were grappling.

Iskra was no more fortunate in its efforts to prevail over the S.R.s. A few years earlier Plekhanov had scornfully dismissed the very thought of a Populist revival.³ At first neither he nor any of his colleagues realized that they were confronted by a serious challenge. His initial reaction was to try blandishments. Of one S.R. manifesto he declared that 'it is really a statement of the principles of Russian Social Democracy, and we fail to understand why its authors do not realize this, or why they find it necessary to conceal it'.⁴ This honeymoon period soon came to an abrupt end when it became apparent that the S.R.s were in no mood to accept dictation from *Iskra*. Tension mounted until many *émigré* adherents of the two parties ceased to be on speaking terms.

The argument between them centred upon two issues: the use of terrorist methods and the agrarian problem. Plekhanov, whose mind at once went back to his conflict with *Narodnaya Volya*, feared that a renewal of terrorism would nip the incipient mass movement in the bud. He was even prepared to conclude a truce with the Economists in order to form a common front against his old enemies.⁵ Zasulich, whose opinion on this question naturally carried great weight, maintained that acts of terror by individuals were inappropriate at the present time, and called on the S.R.s to transfer their attention to the task of mobilizing the peasants. Somewhat embarrassed by so formidable an opponent, they replied by claiming that terrorist acts were a most effective means of inciting the masses to rise against the régime. Plekhanov admitted that there was 'a grain of truth' in this, but held that street demonstrations

¹ *Lenin*, xxviii. 24-25.

² M. Savel'yev, in *PR* (1928), no. 77-78, p. 20.

³ *Plekhanov*, ix. 324.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xii. 124.

⁵ *Perepiska*, ii. 182.

could perform the same function more effectively. In general, he argued, terror encouraged people to adopt a passive attitude and signified lack of confidence in their initiative.¹ It is perhaps not superfluous to add that Plekhanov and his colleagues opposed terrorist methods only on grounds of political expediency, not of morality. They were ready, for instance, to endorse what was euphemistically called 'factory terror'—i.e. acts of violence against suspected police spies or *agents provocateur*. A still more significant phenomenon was the widespread sympathy for terrorist methods that existed among militant working-class elements that were nominally Social Democrats. At Kazan the local Party committee reprinted S.R. literature. Fourteen committees of the Jewish Bund, as well as some in the Ukraine, publicly declared that they supported terrorism in principle. At Saratov and in the Urals joint Leagues of S.R.s and S.D.s were formed. Boris Savinkov, one of the best-known members of the Fighting Organization, was an active Social Democrat before he joined the Socialist-Revolutionaries.² These facts show that the 'proletarian class consciousness' on which the Russian Marxists based their thinking was skin-deep—if indeed it can be said to have existed at all. Among a large segment of the Russian population there was a latent inclination towards the cruder forms of violence, which naturally sought to express itself within the framework of a Party committed to Marxist principles.

It was still harder for *Iskra* to reply to the S.R.s' arguments on the peasant question. This had always been the weakest spot in the Social Democrats' theoretical armour. Now that the peasants of the black-earth region had given proof of their rebellious spirit, they could no longer afford to disregard so completely the situation in the countryside. The concept of hegemony required that they should seek to control the peasant movement. Even before the riots Lenin had begun to wrestle with the problem of modifying the traditional attitude without making any obvious theoretical concessions to Populism. He developed his ideas in a number of articles, one of which bore the characteristic title: 'Why should the Social Democrats Wage a Merciless Resolute Struggle against the Socialist-Revolutionaries?'³ As always, he was concerned to cloak his views with a mantle of orthodox respectability.

If the S.R.s could justly tax their Marxist opponents with having closed their eyes to the peasants' potential value as a revolutionary force,

¹ *Plekhanov*, xii. 240ff.

² *Iskra*, no. 21 (1 June 1902); no. 25 (15 September 1902); V. M. Chernov, *Pered burey* (N.Y., 1953), p. 140; I. N. Moshinsky, in *Katorga i ssylka* [hereafter cited as *KiS*] (1928), no. 45-46, p. 50; S. N. Valk, in *Istoriko-revolutsionnyy sbornik*, ed. V. I. Nevsky (M.-Lg., 1924), i. 127.

³ *Lenin*, v. 131.

Iskra could counter by exposing the S.R. fallacy that the peasant rioters were embryonic socialists. Peasants were by definition members of one of the two antagonistic classes in capitalist society, and those who had rioted clearly belonged to the 'bourgeoisie' or 'petty bourgeoisie': that is to say, they had no thought of establishing a collectivist society, but merely wished to farm the land as private smallholders. Once they had satisfied their land hunger, they would cease to be radical democrats and emerge as stalwart conservatives. By heedlessly endorsing their demands, the S.R.s were allegedly promoting the class interests of the wealthier peasants, and therefore had no right to call themselves socialists at all. Lenin wrote:

The modern agrarian movement is by no means a socialist movement directed against capitalism. On the contrary, it unites the bourgeois and proletarian elements of the peasantry . . . in a joint struggle against the relics of feudalism. It aims at introducing, not a socialist or semi-socialist system, but a bourgeois one which will free the village from the shackles of feudalism.¹

This argument conveniently overlooked the fact that only a few years earlier he had based his reasoning on the assumption that capitalism was already firmly established in the Russian village. He now unobtrusively retreated from this standpoint, shifting his emphasis from the class struggle between the richer and poorer peasants to the common endeavours of the peasantry as a whole against the defenders of 'feudalism'. This was a struggle, he maintained, which the Social Democrats should actively support 'in so far as it is directed against the absolutist order'.² The S.R.s welcomed Lenin's article as evidence that the Marxists were being forced by events to meet them half-way: 'Yet another of our differences', one of them wrote approvingly, 'is becoming less acute.'³ They did not appreciate that, as will be shown below, Lenin's support for the peasant movement was a tactical manoeuvre which did not imply any endorsement—such as was given unconditionally

¹ *Lenin*, v. 156.

² 'In the Russian village today there are two kinds of class contradiction: firstly, that between agricultural labourers and their employers, and secondly, that between the peasants as a whole and the landowners. The first contradiction is growing stronger, while the second is gradually becoming weaker. The former still lies in the future, while the latter already lies largely in the past. But despite this it is precisely the second of these contradictions which . . . has greater practical significance for Russian Social Democrats today.' Of course, he continued, one should not neglect work among the poorer peasants—this was axiomatic: 'But our village labourers are still too closely tied to the peasantry . . . and therefore their movement cannot be of national importance now or in the near future. On the other hand the question of sweeping away the remnants of feudalism . . . is already of national importance, and a party which claims to lead the fight for freedom cannot ignore it' (*Lenin*, iv. 102–3).

³ *Vestnik russkoy revolyutsii* (1901), no. 1, p. 85.

by the Populists—of the principal motive that inspired the peasants themselves.

The new line towards the peasant movement was reflected in a draft agrarian programme which, largely on Lenin's personal insistence, was adopted by *Iskra* in 1902 and by the Party congress in the following year. This represented a departure from accepted Marxist practice, since in no other country did a Social-Democratic party programme contain any special demands on behalf of the peasants. Lenin was always careful to stress that Russian Social Democracy remained a strictly proletarian party, and justified his innovation as relevant to the unusual social and political situation pertaining at this time in the Russian countryside. To forestall criticism from traditionalists that he was abandoning the poorer peasants for the sake of an alliance with their wealthier exploiters, he stated that, taken as a whole, the peasants were 'much more of a conservative than a revolutionary element'.¹ He also made it clear that the support which he advocated for the peasantry was to be only provisional: once the more prosperous peasants had succeeded the landowners as the new masters of the village, the alliance between them and the workers would be at an end. But at the same time he characteristically left open the possibility that even after the revolution many of them would show gratitude to the Social Democrats for having helped them to realize their age-old aspirations, and that the Russian party would thus be able to set an example to its brother-parties in the West, which had been distressingly laggard in winning rural support.²

So much for the basic principle: when he came to work out the practical details of an agrarian programme relevant to Russian conditions, he soon ran into difficulties. How far could one go in satisfying the land hunger of the peasants without holding up the process of economic development, which in orthodox Marxist eyes was identified with the triumph of large-scale over small-scale farming? In other words, what future would there be for socialism in a country where the workers and their allies among the poorer peasants faced a firmly-entrenched class of individualistic peasant proprietors? The outlines were already taking shape of the cardinal problem that was to confront the Bolsheviks as rulers of Russia in the 1920's.

The solution which Lenin now offered was none too satisfactory. The essence of his proposals was a demand that the peasants should be given, not *all* the land that belonged to the dispossessed gentry (since this would make them too strong), but only the so-called *otrezki* (literally: 'cut-offs')—those portions tilled by the peasants prior to the Emancipation edicts of 1861, but which had been cut off under the

¹ *Lenin*, v. 97.

² *Ibid.*, v. 110.

provisions of that settlement and awarded to the landlords.¹ He claimed that the *otrezki* constituted the economic basis of the 'feudal remnants' that still survived in the countryside, and that their transfer to peasant ownership would 'give a mighty impulse to . . . further capitalist progress in agriculture.'² However, despite a great deal of juggling with facts and figures, he never really succeeded in showing that the *otrezki* did in fact play such a decisive economic role. It was obvious that the demand for their return was based on considerations of political tactics, not on the fruits of economic analysis. The *otrezki* were quite arbitrarily taken to represent that minimum quantity of land which would encourage the wealthier peasants to accept the Social Democrats' leadership, and yet would not permit them to give full rein to their 'reactionary' instincts as petty proprietors.

The artificiality of the *otrezki* demand was apparent not only to the Social Democrats' Populist rivals,³ but also to many within their own ranks. One critic later declared, perhaps with some exaggeration, that 'it made us ridiculous in the eyes of the whole world'.⁴ It was frequently pointed out that the idea of righting a forty-year-old injustice was in itself essentially reactionary. From a purely practical point of view, the return of the *otrezki* would present any government with an impossible task: even if a community had kept some record of the lands that had been 'cut off', its restoration would be supremely irrelevant to present-day conditions. There was nothing to show that the peasants themselves still resented this ancient wrong: the evidence was rather that they would be content with nothing less than the seizure of all the land and its re-distribution among themselves. If the Party were to seek the peasants' support, would it not be simpler to throw doctrinal scruples to the winds and endorse these demands, as the Populists were willing to do? One group of Party workers in the Ukraine, expressing a common attitude among the rank and file, urged *Iskra* 'to take as its slogan the favourite theme of the peasants' dreams'.⁵

These critics were unaware that Lenin was himself eager to go much further along the road of tactical opportunism. When he first raised the issue of the necessity for an agrarian programme he strongly recommended including a demand for nationalization of the land, by

¹ Other demands included the abolition of redemption payments and restrictive legislation, the establishment of rent control tribunals, and the confiscation of certain large estates.

² *Lenin*, v. 105.

³ For an S.R. critique, cf. A. Rudin, *K krest'yanskomu voprosu: obzor tekushchey literatury* (Geneva, 1903).

⁴ *Chetvertyy (ob'yedinitel'nyy) s'yezd RSDRP . . . : protokoly* (M., 1959) [hereafter cited as *Prot. IV*], p. 38.

⁵ *Iskra*, no. 25 (15 September 1902).

which he understood, *inter alia*, Governmental sanction for a 'black re-partition'. But his colleagues on the editorial board of *Iskra* had protested that such a step would impede Russia's economic development, and had forced him to abandon the idea.¹ Some years later, after he had publicly declared himself in favour of nationalization, Lenin sought to blame the *otrezki* fiasco on the future Menshevik leaders: blinded by dogma, they had failed to appreciate the need for the Party to seek peasant support.² No doubt he would have included a call for land nationalization if he had been allowed to do so, but nevertheless the *otrezki* demand was entirely his own idea. Martov recalls that he mentioned it already in 1895.³

This point, is, however, not really a material one. Both these proposals—return of the *otrezki* and nationalization of the land—were attempts to reach a compromise between irreconcilable opposites. The difference between them was one of degree, not of substance. In fact Lenin was caught, not for the first or the last time, in a conflict between his head and his heart, between reason and emotion. On one hand he sought to remain loyal to Marxist orthodoxy, which taught that objective laws of historical development should be allowed to take their course; on the other hand he sought to make the most of the enticing revolutionary perspectives that had suddenly been opened up by the peasant riots. He saw, as though in a vision, how mighty the Party would become if it could but succeed in hitching itself to the powerful dynamic of an agrarian revolution. The real question was whether socialists who were hostile to small-scale farming on principle could in good faith appeal for the support of peasants who—as they themselves well knew—desired precisely to acquire the land as individual proprietors. The idea that one could distinguish between progressive and reactionary aspects of the peasant movement, and endorse the former while condemning the latter, was an intellectual exercise remote from all reality. It was clearly impossible for Party agitators to make such a distinction in practice: they could scarcely approach turbulent peasant crowds unless they at least paid lip service to their demands. It was in fact this manoeuvre that Lenin expected them to perform: today they were to call for the land to be given to the peasants: tomorrow they were to insist that they surrender their gains in the interests of socialism. Implicit in his idea of land nationalization was an abandonment of the traditional concept of a two-phase revolution. Lenin was again ready, as he had been in his criticism of Struve seven years before, to leap over 'essential' stages of development in his eagerness to realize the Party's ultimate aim. For unless action were taken at once to deepen

¹ See below, p. 115. ² *Lenin*, xi. 362–3.

³ Yu. O. Martov, *Zapiski sotsial-demokrata* (Berlin-Pg.-M., 1922), p. 331.

and extend the revolution, the fears of his fellow-editors of *Iskra* would come to pass: the new class of bourgeois peasant proprietors would strike root, and the Party would simply have helped to erect a formidable obstacle to the victory of the proletariat.

Lenin was of course determined that this should not happen. Like Chernov, he expected that the revolution would greatly weaken the bourgeoisie and make possible a speedy advance to socialism. But unlike Chernov he saw the enemy fortress as situated in the village, not in the town; it was not communally-minded peasants who would be in the vanguard of the new order, but industrial workers, who after the revolution would be strong enough to suppress the threat of reaction from the peasant proprietors before they became too firmly entrenched. For this purpose they would have at their disposal a powerful weapon: State ownership of the land. Significantly enough, Lenin spoke of 'nationalization' in preference to the Populist term 'socialization': the controls which he visualized were to be exercised not by semi-autonomous rural authorities, but by the central Government; they were to serve as a means of overawing peasant proprietors, not of defending their interests by preserving equality among them. Thus although Lenin approached the Populists in externals, the spirit of his thinking remained very different.

The implications of his ideas, still very imprecisely expressed, lay concealed in the mists of the future. The immediate result was that the Social Democrats were left with the woefully inadequate demand for return of the *otrezki*, which was clearly unlikely to make much impression upon peasant audiences in their present militant frame of mind. They accused the S.R.s of pandering to the interests of the richer peasants, but they themselves 'went to the people' with a programme less radical than that of their rivals. *Iskra's* endeavour to exercise 'hegemony' over the awakening peasant millions ended in frustrated anticlimax.

When *Iskra* first appeared Economism was already dying a natural death, and the disturbances in the spring of 1901 hastened its demise. Nevertheless the editors of the new paper embarked with great enthusiasm on the task of laying its ghost. In the process they succeeded in asserting their own control over the Party and creating a myth which served to buttress their authority. They claimed that by timely and vigorous action, with the support of the rank and file, they had averted a dangerous threat to the ideological purity and organizational unity of the Party. The reality, however, was different: a new political doctrine emerged within the framework of Marxist orthodoxy and the much-vaunted unity, brought about after long delay and at considerable cost, was soon exposed as a phantom.

The campaign between the Iskristis (as supporters of *Iskra* called themselves) and the Economists was fought in two theatres: in the *émigré* colonies and in the clandestine Party committees scattered across the map of Russia. The *émigré* groups were so minute in size that the story of their changing fortunes would scarcely be worth telling were it not for the ideological implications of the struggle.

When Lenin arrived in Western Europe he found the heretics in the League almost embarrassingly eager for compromise. At one point they deprived him of the very justification for *Iskra's* existence by inviting him to co-operate in reviving the official Party newspaper established at the Minsk congress. Some months later both he and Plekhanov were offered an opportunity to collaborate in the publication of Takhtarev's *Rabochaya Mysl'*. Both overtures were rebuffed.¹ It was vital to the plans of the orthodox to portray the League as the foe of Party unity. Actually two of its leading figures, Kopelson and Teplov, were at that moment touring the committees endeavouring to arrange for a new congress. Their arrest led to the collapse of this plan² and strengthened *Iskra's* claim that real unity could be achieved only at a gathering held abroad after due preparation. Lenin argued that all talk of unity through compromise was worthless. There could be no progress without conflict; a thunderstorm was often beneficial since it helped to clear the air. While publicly lamenting the evil consequences of disunity, he sought to prolong it until the 'shattered temple of Social Democracy', as he put it, could be rebuilt to his own design.

There was one brick which obstinately refused to fit into the new edifice. This was a group of Marxist *émigrés* led by D. B. Goldenbakh (Ryazanov) (1870-1938), an energetic and talented writer of unexceptionably orthodox views. He was Lenin's contemporary and more than his equal in Marxist scholarship; he could also claim several years' practical experience as the organizer of clandestine propagandist groups in Odessa. On leaving Russia he settled in Paris, where he attracted a few followers, among whom was an ambitious and volatile young man named Yu. M. Nakhamkis (Steklov). They took the view that the differences between *Iskra* and the League were due simply to misunderstanding, and rather naïvely devoted themselves to the task of effecting a reconciliation. In the spring of 1901 they proposed that all the *émigré* groups should confer to negotiate a settlement. The suggestion was welcomed by the League, and the editors of *Iskra*, not wishing to appear intransigent, had no option but to consent as well.

¹ *Lenin*, xxviii. 57, 63.

² A conference took place at Smolensk in April 1900, which Lenin was delegated to attend; but he did not appear and the meeting was ineffectual.

Lenin was determined that any united *émigré* organization which might be formed should be firmly under *Iskra's* control, and also that no agreement entered into should compromise his group's freedom of action. The conference, held in Geneva in June 1901, endorsed in principle his scheme to substitute for the League a new association with a more centralized pattern of organization. The details were to be discussed independently by the rival factions, and a further conference held at Zurich in October, when the new body was to be formally set up. A few days before this second meeting took place the League summoned the third congress in its history, at which it was decided to request some trivial modifications in the draft agreement. Lenin had by this time decided that *Iskra's* position was strong enough for him to refuse any concessions, however slight, to his opponents. Accordingly he resolved to rupture the talks and found a rival organization to the League, from which its supporters should be excluded. The proposed amendments, and two articles critical of *Iskra* which had recently appeared in *Rabocheye Delo*, served as convenient pretexts. After a day and a half of fruitless recrimination the meeting was suspended. The *Iskra* group held a council of war. Lenin's colleagues questioned the expediency of forcing a breach, but were eventually persuaded to swallow their scruples. A formal denunciation of the Economist heresy was compiled. When the sitting was resumed this was read out with all due ceremony, and the *Iskrists* then made their exit—accompanied, so we are told, by the cry: 'Down with the sectarians!'¹

Lenin had calculated well. Although the League remained in existence, it now had a competitor in the 'Foreign League of Revolutionary Russian Social Democracy' (*Zagranichnaya Liga Revolyutsionnoy Russkoy Sotsial-demokratii*).² This differed from the old League both in its aims and its organizational structure. It was designed as a body of men entirely subordinate to *Iskra* and actively concerned in extending its authority. Although its statute, like that of the old League, provided for the convening of periodical congresses and for executive posts to be filled by election, this was a mere formality. Lenin wrote privately that 'there is nothing to fear from an elected administration', since the organization's functions would be so limited in scope.³

¹ Yu. M. Steklov, in *PR* (1923), no. 17, pp. 235-6; 'K istorii Zagranichnoy Ligi . . .', in *PR* (1928), no. 76, pp. 166-83; *Lenin*, iv. 520-7, 592.

² It absorbed the 'Revolutionary Organization "Social-Democrat"' set up by Plekhanov eighteen months earlier, which had in fact only existed on paper. For the sake of clarity the new organization will here be referred to as the 'Foreign League', to distinguish it from the old League of Russian Social Democrats Abroad (see above, p. 55).

³ *Leninskiy sbornik*, iii. 163-4; *Pis'ma P. B. Aksel'roda i Yu. O. Martova* (Berlin, 1924) [hereafter cited as *Pis'ma*], pp. 27ff.

From Lenin's point of view the deliberate rupture did have one unwelcome consequence which he can hardly have anticipated. Ryazanov and his colleagues took umbrage at Lenin's manœuvre, which had led to the failure of their well-intentioned efforts to promote unity. They now gave their group a formal status, taking the name 'Struggle' (*Bor'ba*)—making it abundantly clear that this struggle was to be waged as fiercely against *Iskra* as against any other group or school of thought. Ryazanov was unable to finance a periodical of his own—almost a *sine qua non* for success among Russian radicals; but he did succeed in presenting his views in a large number of inordinately turgid pamphlets. The inaugural manifesto of this group blamed *Iskra* for seeking to impose its will upon the movement by force, and contained an ambiguous reference, apparently directed against Lenin, to 'the cult of personality'.¹ Ryazanov also criticized *Iskra's* draft Party programme for its scholastic rigidity and lack of realism, but his own views were not distinguished by any notable originality. If anything, he was more dogmatic than Lenin. Towards the nascent Russian liberals he adopted an attitude of inflexible hostility which entitles him to be regarded as the first spokesman of the 'Bolshevik left' (a school of thought as old as Leninism itself). The 'Struggle' group did not gain any noteworthy support, but its very existence was a constant thorn in the side of *Iskra*, since it encouraged doubts as to the validity of its claim to be the sole representative of orthodoxy.

The old *émigré* League was in no position to make political capital out of Lenin's conduct at the Zurich meeting, since its power was now almost entirely undermined. Martynov, who had taken Teplov's place as editor-in-chief of *Rabocheye Delo*, was an accomplished polemical writer and an opponent of authoritarian tendencies, but intellectually no match for Plekhanov or Lenin. His colleagues Krichevsky and Ivanshin favoured a compromise with *Iskra* in the interests of Party unity. The League lacked the financial resources available to its adversaries, and its channels of communication with Russia were less extensive. Its organ appeared less regularly than *Iskra*. During the course of 1901 it steadily lost the prestige and influence it had once enjoyed, and in February 1902 it ceased publication altogether.²

This decline was of course not due solely to the technical superiority of its rival. The current mood of rather bewildered enthusiasm favoured those who could give a clear lead. Martynov and his colleagues were caught unawares by the events of February and March 1901, the

¹ *Lenin*, v. 81, 389–93.

² For the League's own account of its activities, see its report to the second Party congress, which that body refused to accept. It was first printed by V. P. Makhnovets (Akimov) in *Minuvshiye gody* (1908), no. 7, pp. 279–96. It is included in the latest edition of the congress proceedings (*Prot. II*, pp. 687–94).

significance of which they greatly exaggerated. In an article entitled 'A Turning-point in History', Martynov proclaimed that this was the beginning of the revolution, and called on the Party 'to alter its tactics radically—the sooner and more irrevocably, the better'. The only prudent policy was one of audacity: the people should 'form up in assault columns' and 'storm the fortress of despotism'.¹ *Iskra* reacted to the news with greater restraint. Martov pointed to the tremendous tasks which the Party still had to accomplish if it were to assume leadership of the mass movement now coming into being.² The League's spokesmen had never been content to advocate industrial action alone, but they were out of their element in the new atmosphere of political ferment, and their adversaries could argue with some justification that they lacked a due sense of responsibility. Hitherto they had emphasized the need for steady organizational work to build up a democratic labour party with its roots firmly planted in the masses. The suddenness with which they abandoned this sober course undermined their prestige: they seemed to lack the courage of their convictions. *Iskra* spoke in self-confident tones, and this helped to swing Party opinion in its favour. To hard-pressed activists anxiously struggling to master new problems *Iskra* offered firm and authoritative guidance.

It was in the course of the controversy over the significance of the 1901 demonstrations that Lenin propounded the first tenets of the political creed that was eventually to bear his name. Krichevsky endeavoured to come to his colleague Martynov's rescue by developing a theoretical justification for his change of line. But he had no more success than with his earlier theory of the inevitability of gradualness: his adversaries seized on his words and gave them an interpretation he had not intended. His argument was simply that a revolutionary should always take the environmental factor into account when deciding the tactics his party should adopt. *Iskra*, however, seemed to be striving to implement a predetermined plan and paying insufficient regard to the experience gained by the masses themselves in the course of their struggles. It was divorcing theory from practice—a dangerous tendency which, if it were not checked, would cause the Party to degenerate into a sect. 'Evidently', he concluded, 'the disagreement between *Iskra* and ourselves about fundamentals of tactics is also reflected in a different estimate of the relative significance of the "spontaneous" and the "conscious-systematic" element in . . . the revolutionary struggle.' Consciousness was admittedly important, but Marxism would commit suicide 'if it took no account of, or minimized the significance of, the spontaneous element—not only during a period

¹ *Listok Rabochego Dela*, no. 6 (April 1901), pp. 4–6.

² *Iskra*, no. 3 (April 1901).

of evolution, where this is obvious, but also during a revolution'.¹

Plekhanov's reply to this none too controversial thesis still kept matters in reasonable perspective: he merely denied that *Iskra* was following any immutable plan.² But Lenin went on to exaggerate vastly the role of the conscious at the expense of the spontaneous element. Already in 1900 he had remarked that 'when divorced from Social Democracy the labour movement inevitably degenerates into bourgeois ways'.³ This idea now became the theme of his celebrated pamphlet *What is to be Done?*, published in March 1902. Left to its own devices, he declared, the labour movement could *only* be spontaneous, while consciousness developed separately. As he put it in a frequently cited passage:

Social-Democratic consciousness cannot exist among the workers. This can be introduced only from without. The history of all countries shows that by its own unaided efforts the working class is capable of evolving only a 'trade-unionist' consciousness—that is to say, a conviction of the necessity to form trade unions, struggle with their employers, obtain from the government this or that law required by the workers, and so on. But the teaching of socialism has developed out of philosophical, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the possessing classes, by intellectuals. Marx and Engels, the founders of modern scientific socialism, themselves belonged, according to their social status, to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the same way in Russia the doctrine of Social Democracy developed quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the labour movement, as the natural and inevitable result of the development of ideas among revolutionary socialist intellectuals.⁴

The implication was that this was no mere accident of history, but a natural state of affairs which it was desirable to perpetuate. For he went on to declare that: 'The spontaneous development of the labour movement results in its becoming subjected to bourgeois ideology and following the programme of *Credo*, since the spontaneous labour movement is trade unionism, *Nurgewerkschaftlerei*, and trade unionism means precisely the subjection of the workers to the bourgeoisie.'⁵ But had not Marxists always held that socialism was the natural expression of the class interest of the proletariat? Lenin conceded that the workers were indeed 'spontaneously attracted to socialism', but argued that 'bourgeois ideology, being more prevalent, nevertheless attaches itself to the workers still more closely'.⁶

This was a bold affirmation of an élitist approach to politics that was quite novel to Russian Social-Democratic thought. Lenin here demonstrated that he had little or no faith in the traditional Marxist concept

¹ *Rabocheye Delo*, no. 10 (September 1901), pp. 17–19. ² *Plekhanov*, xii. 126.

³ *Lenin*, iv. 56. ⁴ *Ibid.*, iv. 384–5. ⁵ *Ibid.*, iv. 392. ⁶ *Ibid.*, iv. 393.

of an inherent proletarian 'class consciousness': on the contrary, he believed that the workers would fall prey to alien influences unless this were prevented by timely action on the part of their leaders. The theory presupposed that these leaders were somehow conscious of the workers' true interests—to a greater extent, perhaps, than they could be themselves, in view of their 'spontaneous' state. It was plain that, for all his pious obeisances in the direction of Marxist determinism, Lenin was essentially a believer in the limitless opportunities open to the individual, if only his energies were properly inspired and directed. Thus he blamed the Economists for not realizing 'what marvels can be achieved for the revolutionary cause, not only by a [propagandist] circle, but even by a single individual'.¹ What counted in politics, in his view, was the power of men and ideas. Never had theory been more important than in the present time of confusion: 'Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.'² Marxist ideology placed at the disposal of a determined and enterprising leader, or group of leaders, the mighty force of the proletarian millions as they awakened at last from their age-long apathy and prepared to engage the capitalist foe in mortal combat.³

In *What is to be Done?*³ the emphasis is shifted decisively away from mass action to action by a revolutionary vanguard enjoying mass support. The entire work is in fact an essay on the tasks facing this group of leaders. Lenin inquires into the cause of the crisis besetting the Party at the present time, and concludes that the root of the trouble is its physical disunity—its 'particularism' (*kustarnichestvo*), as he called it. 'Particularism is a far worse enemy than Economism, for the deepest life-giving roots of Economism, I am firmly convinced, lie in particularism.' Or again: 'Our movement suffers from lack of unity more than from anything else . . . it is precisely in this quality that one must seek the deepest roots of [the Economists'] inconsistency and vacillation.'⁴ The accuracy of this diagnosis was questionable: disunity was surely a symptom of the sickness rather than its cause. But it was on this basis that the cure was prescribed. For if the Party's weakness was simply due to inadequate organization, then it followed that it could best be overcome by the imposition of centralized control from above. The immediate task was to build up 'an organization of revolutionaries', consisting of men who had no other occupation than clandestine political activity. So far as social origin was concerned, they would inevitably be intellectuals—at least in the immediate future. These 'knights of revolution' were to be carefully selected for their loyalty and enthusiasm. There was to be no conventional labour

¹ *Lenin*, iv. 443.

² *Ibid.*, iv. 380.

³ *Ibid.*, iv. 398.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xxviii. 123; iv. 110.

organization, aspiring to attract wide popular support. Bodies of this professional type had a strictly subordinate place in Lenin's plans. Having described their functions, he concluded by virtually denying the need for them: 'A small closely-knit cadre of the most reliable, experienced and skilled workers, with extensive support from the masses and without any formal establishment, can perform quite satisfactorily all the functions required of a "professional" organization'.¹ Elsewhere he wrote of trade unions that, although they could sometimes contribute much to the political education of the workers, 'they can also do much for their political corruption'.²

It was as an 'organization of revolutionaries' that Lenin envisaged the renascent R.S.D.R.P. He elaborated his views on this subject more clearly in his *Letter to a Comrade* (originally addressed to A. A. Shneyerson), which was reprinted as a pamphlet and, like *What is to be Done?*, circulated to the committees that were in receipt of *Iskra*.³ Within the Party supreme authority was to rest with two institutions: a Central Committee, operating clandestinely in Russia itself, which was to distribute literature to the local groups and control their work, and a Central Organ, published abroad, which was to direct the Party's intellectual life. Agreement between these two bodies was to be ensured by appointing to them men known to be in complete personal accord with one another. This would create a homogeneous 'centre' on which the committees in the various towns—no intermediate regional bodies were envisaged—would be absolutely dependent. No changes in their membership were to be permitted without the Central Committee's prior consent. The local committees were to exercise equally strict supervision over all subordinate groups: city district (*rayon*) committees, where these existed, and factory cells, as well as various functional groups attached to the local committee. One recommendation was that both the central organizations should have the right to maintain direct contact with groups at the lowest level, by-passing the local committee. Evidently Lenin was here catering for the possibility of a revolt on the part of a local committee, and wished to give the centre power to suppress it by recruiting support among its subordinates. But the general pattern was one of strict hierarchy. All members of factory cells, he wrote: 'should regard themselves as agents of the local committee, obliged . . . to observe all the "laws and customs" of that "regular army" in which they have enlisted, and which they have no right to leave in war-time without permission of the authorities.'⁴

The military terminology was by no means inappropriate. Lenin seemed to visualize the Party as an army on parade, each unit having its allotted functions and responsibilities, each obediently carrying

¹ *Ibid.*, iv. 452.

² *Ibid.*, iv. 148.

³ *Ibid.*, v. 179-92.

⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 186.

out the commands given it from above. Yet he also saw it as a living organism, flexible and self-reliant, immediately responsive to every change of circumstance. Were the two aims compatible? His ultra-centralist scheme, which seemed to contain an element of utopian fantasy, raised more problems than it solved. Its most obvious deficiency was the lack of an effective check on the actions of the leadership. No provision was made for the contingency that men enjoying such wide powers might become absorbed in the task of administration and lose contact with the rank and file; nor was any organizational mechanism visualized which could resolve genuine differences among the leaders over policy. True, the Party was to be 'democratic': but Lenin's interpretation of this term, as applied to Party affairs, was a perversely narrow one which allowed him to skirt the real issues at stake. In his eyes democracy involved, not popular control, but simply 'full publicity and elections to all posts'.¹ It was sufficient, he thought, that members should be free to discuss Party policy within certain limits. At this stage he did not trouble to define what those limits should be: it was not until 1905 that he evolved the now familiar concept of 'democratic centralism'.² The principle of election did not imply that the electors had any right to influence policy: it was synonymous with the selection by his fellows of the right man to perform a particular function allotted from above.³ Moreover, Lenin thought that the formalities which elections involved distracted attention from more urgent matters, and should be reduced to a minimum. He considered that there existed a better alternative to what he contemptuously called 'playing at democracy': this was 'complete comradely trust between revolutionaries'.

The phrase gives the key to his thinking. In a small comradely circle his intellect and powers of persuasion enabled him to dominate his colleagues. This was for him a natural and ideal state of affairs, which he assumed could be reproduced *ad infinitum*; just as he took it for granted that he would exercise the same authority once his own narrow circle had given place to a Party formed in its image, so he also

¹ *Lenin*, iv. 467.

² See below, p. 285.

³ Lenin also presented what he referred to vaguely as 'formulation' (*oformlyonmost'*) as a countervailing force to centralism. By this he meant the maximum decentralization of responsibility: each individual or unit was to have his or its specific tasks, known to those at the summit. This was no more than an adjunct to efficient centralized control. As Lenin put it expressively: 'So that the centre may not only advise, persuade, and discuss, as hitherto, but really direct the orchestra, it must know exactly who is playing which violin and where . . ., who is playing a wrong note, where and why (when the music begins to grate on one's ears), who must be moved to rectify the dissonance . . . and so on' (*Ibid.*, v. 188-90).

presupposed that those who followed his lead would automatically model their conduct upon his own. It was not simply that he felt confident of his ability to check any dangerous nonconformity among his fellow-leaders. He believed that normally their views would in any case tend to be identical: as the revolutionary vanguard, they would be guided by their consciousness of the class will of the proletariat—which he saw as concrete and clearly ascertainable. In the same way he assumed that virtually complete harmony would normally prevail when deciding on the merits of candidates for Party posts. It would be rare for a Party member to challenge a common decision or prove himself incapable of fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to him: when this occurred, the individual concerned could be disciplined, or even expelled; but in either case it would be an affair of minor consequence.

Lenin took no account of the lessons of political theory—particularly as regards the operation of large administrative organizations. Whether he was aware of such considerations remains doubtful, since his mind was closed to ideas foreign to the Marxist tradition. He assumed that the organizational pattern suitable to a small group could be applied without difficulty to units of larger size; that the Party could preserve its youthful spirit of *camaraderie* for an indefinite length of time; and that institutional checks and balances could be dispensed with among men who were soldiers in a common cause. Their natural sense of solidarity would suffice to overcome all divergences of interest, including the scarcely avoidable antagonism between those who wielded power and those who did not.

This belief in the limitless potentialities of comradeship was remarkably optimistic when seen in the light of the past history and current practice of the Russian revolutionary movement, with its interminable dissensions and conflicts. At the back of his mind was the assumption that all these arguments could ultimately be settled by the force of his own personality—although this was a thought he could not afford to voice aloud. Publicly he refused to acknowledge that the problem of reconciling freedom and authority existed; and his scheme of organization therefore contained no safety-valve through which legitimate differences of opinion might be ventilated. It was thus inevitable that the Party he sought to build would be ceaselessly plagued by violent tensions.

These latent defects in no way detracted from the impact made at the time upon many Russian Social Democrats by Lenin's ideas. Their simplicity enhanced their appeal. *What is to be Done?* did much to consolidate the future Bolshevik leader's personal standing among Party activists and the rank and file. 'It gave us practical workers what we particularly needed,' wrote V. O. Levitsky, a young committee-man

at Kharkov.¹ Whether judged from a short-term or a long-term view, its significance was immense. It enabled Lenin to leave a lasting imprint upon the physiognomy of the reconstituted R.S.D.R.P., and it became the first book in the bible of a new revolutionary creed. None of Lenin's other early writings had such a striking success: it undoubtedly deserves to rank as a major document of twentieth-century political thought. Its relation to the Marxist tradition is less clear. At the time Lenin strenuously denied that he was making any significant innovation, and went out of his way to claim that his views on consciousness and spontaneity had the backing of Karl Kautsky. There is a certain element of truth in the argument that Lenin's emphasis on strict discipline was necessitated by the practical problems that faced any clandestine revolutionary party in Russia. But this is also something of a red herring. As we know, Lenin saw Party organization as a matter of the highest principle, and would have been guilty of rank opportunism if he had allowed so important a question to be determined by considerations of expediency. In *What is to be Done?* he maintained that his cardinal distinction between 'organizations of revolutionaries' and 'organizations of workers' was also applicable to countries that enjoyed political liberty; and in 1905, when the political climate in Russia had changed and the Social Democrats could engage in open activity, he continued to urge the maintenance of secrecy and centralized control.² There seems no reason to doubt that his ideas on Party organization followed logically from his concept of a revolutionary *élite* as the custodian of proletarian consciousness: centralism was necessary to protect the spontaneous masses from infection by the germs of opportunism.

This was a view that had a respectable ancestry in the history of Russian radical thought. The source of Lenin's political doctrine may be traced back to the Jacobinism of the 1870's, and *What is to be Done?* seen as an attempt to graft these native beliefs on to classical Western European Marxism. This idea has today become such a familiar proposition that one tends to overlook how insistently Lenin himself rejected the suggestion that there was any theoretical affinity between Bolshevism and Populism. At the time the gulf between the two schools of thought seemed well-nigh unbridgeable. Yet in his pamphlet Lenin declared that 'the excellent organization' created by the Populists of the 1870's 'should serve as a model for us all'. The emergence of a mass labour movement did not in his view require the revolutionaries to make a fundamental change in their organizational techniques,

¹ Levitsky (Tsederbaum), *Za chetvert' veka* (M.-L., 1926), i (ii), 122. He was Martov's youngest brother and subsequently became a Menshevik. There is also abundant evidence from Bolshevik sources as to the impact made by Lenin's *What is to be done?*

² Lenin, iv. 447; see below, p. 189.

but on the contrary made centralism more essential than ever.¹ It was perhaps only to be expected that this gesture should evoke criticism on the part of the S.R.s, who saw themselves as the legitimate successors to *Narodnaya Volya*, but were critical of Jacobin extremism. One of their spokesmen declared that Lenin 'goes some way further in drawing a line between the intelligentsia and the proletariat than a proper interpretation of *Narodnaya Volya* allows We even feel it necessary to place certain limitations on his argument.'² In retrospect it is clear that Lenin's doctrine contained more than an echo of classical Populism: it was *sui generis*. A new star had appeared in the ideological firmament, and few could discern what it portended.

Lenin found himself in a remarkably good position to put his ideas on Party organization into effect. The other editors of *Iskra* were all men of ideas, content to devote themselves almost exclusively to the literary side of their common enterprise. The financial lifeline of the paper ran through his hands, and on at least one occasion he thought it advisable to conceal from his colleagues information about transactions in which he was engaged.³ He took over from Axelrod the task of maintaining contact with supporters in Russia, performing it with an efficiency that contrasted markedly with the dilatory and amateur methods of his predecessor. Most of his voluminous correspondence⁴ was conducted with the men whom he designated, somewhat grandly, his 'agents'. By the summer of 1901 nine such functionaries were stationed in various Russian cities. Several dozen other people were associated with *Iskra's* activities in a subordinate capacity. At first the arrangements for distributing issues of the paper, as they arrived in Russia (smuggled for the most part across the German frontier), lay mainly in the hands of Martov's brother S. O. Tsederbaum (Yezhov), who resided first at Vilno and then at Poltava. After his arrest *Iskra* was introduced into the country largely by way of the Black Sea ports. Another of Martov's relatives, his sister K. I. Zakharova-Tsederbaum, was active in Odessa, while at Batum *Iskra* had as its agent L. B. Krasin (1870-1926), a resourceful engineer. Among those resident in various Ukrainian centres were F. V. Lengnik and V. N. Krokhmal at Kiev, L. N. Radchenko at Kharkov, and L. I. Goldman at Poltava. In July 1901 the latter succeeded in setting up at Kishinev,

¹ Ibid., iv. 464-5.

² *Vestnik russkoy revolyutsii* (1902), no. 3, p. 13.

³ *Lenin*, xxviii. 102.

⁴ This passed through the hands of his wife, Krupskaya, who acted as his secretary. According to L. P. Menshchikov, at that time a police official, much of it was intercepted and 'played a melancholy role' in bringing about the arrest of Party members, particularly in the Ukraine during 1901 (*Okhrana i revolyutsiya* (M., 1925-9), ii (ii), 77-79).

Bessarabia, a clandestine printing-press capable of reproducing copies of the paper, which enabled it to reach a much wider range of readers. After a few months this press was discovered by the police, but it was replaced by another, situated at Baku and managed by the Georgian L. Ketskhoveri, under the general supervision of Krasin. In the eastern parts of the country *Iskra's* links went through the hands of G. M. Krzhizhanovsky, who lived at Samara; it was not until 1902, however, that he displayed any very great degree of energy in the cause. By this time the Ukrainian agents had been arrested—only to make a daring escape from prison and to flee abroad. In Moscow the *Iskra* representative was N. E. Bauman, but he was largely inactive, owing to the close supervision exercised by Zubatov. In St. Petersburg Lenin could call on the services of I. I. Radchenko, a brother of the former leader of the League of Struggle, and P. N. Lepeshinsky. The latter was living under police supervision at Pskov, but this did not prevent him making secret journeys to the capital, where he fulfilled the instructions he received from abroad.

To call these men 'the world's first Communist *apparatchiki*' would be misleading. They were far from mere automata, and on occasion asserted their individuality very forcibly. Their position was often an awkward one: they were torn between their regard for discipline and their sense of responsibility towards the fortunes of the Party in the town where they worked. Lenin, concerned solely with the problem of spreading the influence of *Iskra*, expected them to win control of the local committee. This they were to do by joining it and agitating for acceptance of their views, or alternatively by forming a parallel body, which would then arrogate to itself the rights and functions of the committee. Several of his agents thought it impermissible to pursue the goal of power by such cynical methods, and on one occasion, as we shall see presently, they revolted. By August 1902 Lenin was complaining to a correspondent that 'in nine cases out of ten (I am speaking from experience) all our expectations about an agent's future activity are blown sky-high the day after he crosses the frontier, when he starts to act just as he pleases'.¹

The extent of support for *Iskra* varied greatly between one region and another. In the western provinces it had relatively little success. Here the chief beneficiary of the new mood of militancy was the Bund—a factor which contributed in no small degree to the growing tension between the two organizations in areas where they were competing for influence. In the Great Russian provinces the situation was more promising, but *Iskra* was unable to establish its influence in either of the two capital cities. This failure was to some extent offset by successes

¹ *Lenin*, xxviii. 99.

in the central industrial region, but the committees here were for the most part small and uninfluential. Their activity was confined largely to propaganda, and they rarely ventured into the streets. It was otherwise in the Ukraine, where Social Democracy was more of an active force. But this success encouraged local committee-men to resist *Iskra's* pretensions to control. They felt that their experience in the field gave them the right to make their voice heard in the Party's counsels. They were proud of their achievements and anxious to make the most of their opportunities. In their view the promotion of the Party's popular influence ought to take precedence over the needs of an *émigré* newspaper, however correct its policy. It was this spirit that brought about the revolt of Lenin's Ukrainian agents.

Almost all the local committees suffered from a fundamental weakness. This lay less in their physical isolation from one another, as Lenin had argued (although this was admittedly a factor of some importance), than in their social make-up: the great gulf between the intellectual committee-men and the rank and file. Committees came into existence 'in an *ad hoc* manner . . . without any sanction by the workers, so that in their eyes their members seemed, so to speak, like "uninvited Varangians", who had "come to rule over them".'¹ The overall picture was a contradictory one. The organizations were expanding, as was shown by the proliferation of district (*rayon*) sub-committees and factory cells. In these bodies men were trained who could take the leaders' places in the event of their arrest, thus providing for a greater degree of continuity than had been possible in the 1890's. The committees were also becoming more efficient technically. Most now had some means of printing, or at least duplicating, tracts and proclamations. But at the same time the local leaders found it difficult to consolidate their following or to sustain the interest and enthusiasm aroused during a crisis once it had passed. This instability was reflected in the manner in which their activities were financed. Membership in a clandestine group carried with it the obligation to contribute to its funds, but this duty was seldom taken very seriously. The Donets valley organization, for instance, was entirely dependent on money supplied by the two intellectuals who ran it. Similarly, in Samara the committee was maintained by the leaders 'imposing taxes upon themselves'. Early in 1903 the Northern Union had a budget of 170 roubles per month, of which 75 roubles were obtained by collections and the rest by individual grants (*pozhtvovaniya*).²

An impartial picture of the problems facing the Kiev committee

¹ V. O. Levitsky (Tsederbaum), *Za chetvert' veka* (M.-Lg., 1926), i (ii). 58; cf. Ts. Zelikson-Bobrovskaya, *Zapiski ryadovogo podpol'shchika* (M., 1924), p. 34.

² *Prot. II*, p. 667; *PR* (1928), no. 77-78, p. 136.

in the summer of 1903 is given in a brochure published at the time by one of its leading members.¹ When news was received of the near-general strike in Odessa, the local Social Democrats decided to take some action in support. Unfortunately most of the students were on vacation, and many activists of proletarian origin had returned to their villages. But the committee had a hundred 'organized workers' to whom it could turn. At a meeting in the woods outside the city the leaders drew up their plans. Leaflets were written and distributed among railwaymen, printers, and metallurgical workers. They contained demands for various economic reforms, notably an eight-hour working day, and concluded with passages of fiery eloquence such as the following: 'together with the working class of all countries, let us Russian workers also march with rapid strides towards the cherished dream of every conscious Social Democrat: to the enthronement of a socialist order, where there will be neither rich nor poor, but all will be equal and free'. Orators were sent out to address the strikers. As a rule the troops stood by without interfering, but at one point there was violence and loss of life. Exaggerated rumours spread through the city, and in most factories work ceased. The committee-men now found themselves overtaken by events. While they debated their next move, they heard groups of men passing their headquarters shout 'Down with the Autocracy!' The situation clearly called for some measure more energetic than the mere writing of leaflets. They arranged a demonstrative funeral procession in honour of those killed in the affray. But then the movement subsided, as suddenly as it had flared up. Only a few hundred men responded to their appeal. The committee had distributed 30,000 leaflets, but without producing any noticeable improvement in its own position. Its members looked back on the affair with mixed emotions: this was the stuff of revolution, yet their actions had not brought the ready response they felt they had a right to expect.

In some ways Kiev was untypical. It had a motley population, and there was a certain amount of national antagonism. This was a factor which the Social Democrats, here as elsewhere, refused to recognize publicly, but it may well have induced them to adopt more cautious tactics. Many of the committee-men in Kiev were of Jewish origin (although hostile to the Bund for its nationalist tendencies), and memories of the notorious *pogrom* at Kishinev in April 1903 were fresh in everyone's mind. Elsewhere in the Ukraine the Social Democrats were rapidly gaining strength. Characteristic was the mushroom growth at Rostov-on-Don. In 1900, when the committee was first formed, it

¹ B. Pravdin, *Revolutsionnye dni v Kieve* (Geneva, 1903); and (by the same author) N. Valentinov, *Vstrechi s Leninyim* (N.Y., 1953), pp. 143ff.

had no more than a few dozen supporters, and their propaganda evoked a cool or hostile response. There were cases of workers denouncing to their employers men who distributed leaflets; sometimes they were taken for 'Polish rebels', 'Jewish unbelievers', or priests anxious to restore serfdom. But these prejudices were soon overcome. By the spring of 1903 the committee claimed to be printing an average of 10,000 leaflets a month—as many as any other committee in the country.¹

It was only to be expected that local leaders in the Ukraine should seek to co-ordinate their activities, taking up the threads arbitrarily cut short after the Minsk congress. In 1900 several intellectuals from Kharkov and Yekaterinoslav joined hands to produce a regional newspaper entitled *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy* ('The Southern Worker').² The technical side of the enterprise was skilfully managed. The paper's editorial line was wholly orthodox, but its tone differed from that of *Iskra*. The men in charge had their ear close to the ground, and could react rapidly to events that took place in the region. Their material was to the point and free from the theorizing and polemical acerbities that characterized Lenin's organ. *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy* soon proved a great success: copies were distributed throughout the Ukraine, and even as far north as Moscow; it was read in the Volga towns, and some issues were printed by Krasin in Baku. With a maximum circulation of 3,000—about half that of *Iskra*—it was naturally a serious competitor to the latter, and one particularly difficult to combat since no taint of heresy could be detected in its propaganda. Lenin called on its organizers to disband, on the plea that a regional newspaper was a luxury which in its present state of chaos the Party could ill afford. Ginsburg and his colleagues not unnaturally rejected the suggestion. In December 1901 they called a conference at Yelizavetgrad (now Kirovograd) in Kherson province, attended by ten delegates representing the chief cities of the Ukraine. It was decided to set up a 'Southern Regional Committee', of which *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy* was to be the official organ. Lenin had no illusions about the threat which this presented to his personal authority: 'it is now our *main* task', he wrote, '... to see that our men penetrate *completely* into as many committees as possible and to try to blow up the Southern Regional Committee.'³ He suspected

¹ *Prot. II*, pp. 586–98.

² Among those involved were I. Kh. Lalayants, A. M. Ginsburg, E. Ya. Levin, V. N. Rozanov, B. S. Tseytlin, and O. A. Yermansky (Kogan)—all of whom eventually became Mensheviks. On the *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy* affair, cf. O. A. Yermansky, *Iz perezhitogo* (M., 1927), pp. 55–60; *Prot. II*, pp. 554–64; N. Angarsky (ed.), *Doklady s.-d. komitetov II-mu s'yezdu* (M.-Lg., 1930), pp. 168–76; *Otchet s'yezda yuzhnykh komitetov* . . . (Geneva, 1902); V. O. Levitsky, op. cit., pp. 62ff.; L. Goldman in *KiS* (1925), no. 17, pp. 27ff.

³ *Lenin*, xxviii. 136.

Yermansky, quite unjustly, of being a police agent. It was at this point that five of his agents met at Kiev and resolved that in future they would ignore his practical instructions, and in particular would refrain from 'blowing up' committees from the outside. Lenin was obliged to beat a retreat. He promised to concede his agents greater freedom of action and invited some of them to Germany for talks. Shortly afterwards, however, most of them were arrested.¹ So, too, were all three members of the new Southern Regional Committee. Levin and Rozanov, the two editors of *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy* who remained at liberty, were inclined to seek a compromise with *Iskra*, but took care to insist that their paper should continue in existence. There for the moment the dispute rested: it was to have important consequences.

Similar tension was evident elsewhere in the Ukraine. *Iskra's* agent in Odessa reported that the committee would take only a limited number of copies of the paper, and refused to allow him to make direct contact with the rank and file, evidently because it feared a possible *coup d'état*.² Martov at one point convinced himself that opposition in the Don area was so intense that it might touch off a general revolt.³ The Kiev committee was persuaded to support *Iskra* in November 1901, but one year later opponents of *Iskra* temporarily regained control.⁴ In all this there was no question of Economism. Nor did the Party leaders in the Ukraine contest *Iskra's* claim to represent the interests of the movement as a whole. But they believed that unless strong local organizations were built up the campaign for unity which *Iskra* was sponsoring might yield a party as lifeless as that founded at Minsk.

In Transcaucasia regionalist tendencies also existed, but they did not as yet lead to tension with the *émigrés*. After the suppression of the strike at Batum in March 1902 some local Social Democrats took refuge in the district of Guria, where the oppressed condition of the peasantry caused them to respond readily to revolutionary agitation. Soon they found themselves at the head of a popular resistance movement with religious and nationalist overtones. Some of the Georgian Marxist leaders were at first reluctant to give this venture their whole-hearted support, but they soon abandoned their doctrinal scruples. In the summer of 1903 a 'committee of village workers' was set up, attached to the Batum Party organization. Its activities had more in common with those of the secret political societies that had existed since time immemorial in the Middle East than with those of Marxist groups in

¹ N. Angarsky (ed.), op. cit., pp. 63-67; L. Goldman, p. 27.

² Prot. II, p. 571.

³ *Leninskiy sbornik*, iv. 185.

⁴ Prot. II, pp. 645-6; N. Angarsky (ed.), pp. 234-5; *Lenin*, xxviii. 156, 168; *Pis'ma*, p. 79; PR (1928), no. 81, pp. 94-96; *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1934), no. 62, pp. 155-7.

Western Europe, or even elsewhere in Russia. In eastern Transcaucasia the advance of Social Democracy was impeded by the Armenians' preoccupation with the liberation of their homeland from the Turks, which caused them to give their support rather to the nationalist organization *Dashmaktsutyun*. However, this also had its advantages. The local police, preoccupied with the nationalists, for some years paid little attention to the activities of the Marxist groups, which were able to lead a semi-legal existence impossible in other parts of the country. By 1903 A. Zurabov and others had succeeded in building up an organization with a following of about 2,500 men, most of whom were Russians. In March 1903 the three principal Transcaucasian committees (Tiflis, Batum, and Baku) joined to form a loose regional organization, the Caucasian Social-Democratic Union, which identified itself with *Iskra*.¹

In the rest of the country, where labour discontent generally took a less militant form, the local Social-Democratic committees enjoyed less influence. The best opportunities were in the more outlying areas, such as the Urals, where revolutionary traditions went back to the days of Pugachev. Those workers, chiefly miners, who joined the Party tended to be scornful of discipline and ideological consistency and had a reputation for raw violence. Further east, where police controls were weaker, a number of Social-Democratic groups sprang up at this time in the rapidly-growing towns along the Trans-Siberian railway, now in its final stages of construction. A group of intellectuals at Tomsk formed the Siberian Social-Democratic Union in 1901. It soon attracted supporters in other centres further to the east. But the vast distances involved made united action difficult, and it was not until 1903 that the Union could undertake any co-ordinated measures. It confined itself for the most part to printed propaganda.²

In Great Russia the local committees that existed in several sleepy provincial towns made slow headway. Their leaders were often political suspects living under a police supervision lax enough to permit clandestine activity. At Nizhny Novgorod (Gorky) the presence of the writer after whom the city is now named gave the movement a certain local prestige. Most of the committee members were intellectuals, some of whom were sympathetic to the Economists; but in 1902 their leaders swung opinion in favour of *Iskra*.³ The most important local

¹ S. T. Arkomed, *Rabocheye dvizhenie i s.-demokratiya na Kavkaze* (M.-Pg., 1923); Yu. Larin, *Rabochiye neft'yanogo dela* (M., 1909), p. 21; Uratadze MSS., in Russian Archive, New York.

² *Prot. II*, pp. 675-80; M. Vetoshkin, *Ocherki po istorii bol'shevistskikh organizatsiy i rev. dvizh. v Sibiri* (M. 1953), pp. 66ff.

³ M. F. Vladimirovsky, *Ocherki rabochego i s.-d. dvizheniya v Nizhnem Novgorode i Sormove* (M., 1957), pp. 58ff.; S. Murashev, *Leninskaya 'Iskra' i nizhegorodskaya organizatsiya bol'shevikov* (M., 1956), pp. 57, 122ff.

organization was the so-called Northern Union, based on Yaroslavl, which had branches at Tver as well as several towns in the upper Volga area. But the great settlement of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, with its thousands of textile workers, still remained scarcely touched by revolutionary propaganda. It was not until the end of 1902 that the Union formally announced its allegiance to *Iskra*.¹

These modest successes could not compensate for the failure of *Iskra* to assert its authority either in St. Petersburg or Moscow. In the former city the Social-Democratic organization remained in the hands of the so-called Economists until the summer of 1903, largely as a result of the tactless conduct of Lenin's agents. The struggle for control of this key centre was fought with a bitterness unparalleled elsewhere. In 1902 I. I. Radchenko, taking advantage of the temporary absence from the city of his chief rival, A. S. Tokarev, tricked his opponents into an agreement which gave his group a decisive voice in the committee's affairs. Lenin was jubilant when he heard the news and urged Radchenko to consolidate his position at once, observing the maxim: 'I want peace, so I prepare with all my might for war.' Tokarev soon returned and persuaded his supporters to repudiate the pact. A new pro-*Iskra* nucleus came into being, but collapsed almost immediately, since most of its members were arrested, while those left at liberty quarrelled among themselves. The upshot was that St. Petersburg was the only committee to be represented at the second Party congress by a declared opponent of *Iskra*.²

In Moscow, by contrast, there was room for neither orthodox nor heretics: the police chief Zubatov was seemingly all-powerful. After the demonstrations in the spring of 1901 so few Social Democrats remained at liberty 'that the first numbers of *Iskra* ordered by the committee were distributed only among intellectuals, and—oh, how shameful!—by the S.R.s, since all trace of the Social Democrats vanished for several months'.³ The key to Zubatov's success was his ingenious scheme of providing the Moscow workers with an alternative form of organization to a clandestine political party: trade unions supervised

¹ O. A. Varentsova, in *PR* (1922), no. 9, pp. 3–39; *Iskra*, no. 34 (15 February 1903); *Prot. II*, pp. 648–71.

² *Lenin*, v. 135ff., 177; N. Angarsky (ed.), op. cit., pp. 99–104; B. Gorev (Goldman) in *KiS* (1924), no. 8, pp. 62–63. One cause of the breach among the *Iskra* supporters appears to have been the action of E. D. Stasova in burning copies of a leaflet issued by their rivals, which Lenin considered 'scandalous'. Both the pro-*Iskra* faction and the so-called 'Workers' Opposition' claimed to be the rightful committee. In March 1903 Gorev pronounced in favour of Stasova's group because, as he writes, 'I considered it more orthodox'. The Workers' Opposition refused to accept this *diktat*, and an arbitration tribunal was set up, which allotted each faction one delegate to the congress.

³ *Prot. II*, p. 632.

by the police.¹ He realized that the workers had genuine grievances which the revolutionary parties could easily exploit. He sensed the basic weakness in the Social-Democratic movement: the gulf between the intellectuals, bent on political revolution, and the rank-and-file workers, who welcomed any means of improving their economic and juridical situation. Years later he wrote: 'The naïve radicalism of Social Democracy at that time, clearly expressed in its ridicule of those who advocated peaceful action, was the error that made the Zubatov movement possible.'² He reasoned that the workers would not commit themselves irrevocably to socialism unless they became convinced that the existing régime could offer them no protection against industrial exploitation. This, he believed, was far from being the case. There were no unbreakable ties between the state power and the business class. On the contrary, it was the principal merit of autocratic rule that it allowed the Government to hold the balance between competing social pressures. He wished to see the autocracy revert to its supposed historic role as protector of the weak against the strong, and so regain its hold on the country, which had been shaken by the defection of a large segment of the educated class. The revolutionary intelligentsia would represent no serious threat to public order once it were deprived of popular support.

So great was the confusion in official circles at this time that a senior civil servant could quite easily pursue an independent policy provided that he enjoyed sufficiently powerful patronage. Zubatov obtained the backing of Grand Duke Sergey and D. F. Trepov, respectively the governor-general and police chief of Moscow, and in the spring of 1901 was able to put his plans into effect. At first he confined his activities to the cultural field. Public meetings were arranged at which predominantly working-class audiences heard lectures on innocuous social and political themes—some of them delivered by liberal-minded professors who did not realize that the operation was being managed by the police. After the ground had been thus prepared, Zubatov established an organization called the Council (later: Society) of Workers in Mechanical Trades in the City of Moscow. It was headed by men who sympathized with his views and maintained close touch with the police authorities. In the winter of 1901–2 similar unions were formed among Moscow textile workers and men employed in other branches

¹ On the *Zubatovshchina*, as this episode came to be known, see S. Aynzaft, *Zubatovshchina i Gaponovshchina*, 4th ed. (M., 1925); Zubatov's memoirs in *Byloye*, 1917, no. 4, pp. 157–78; 'Zubatov i M. Vilbushevich', in *ibid.*, 1918, no. 9, pp. 99–128; S. Piontkovsky (ed.), 'Zubatovshchina i s.-demokratiya: arkhivnye materialy', in *KiS* (1924), no. 8, pp. 66–100; K. Tidmarsh, 'The Zubatov idea', in *Amer. Slavic and E. Europ. Rev.* (1960), xix. 335–46.

² S. M. Zubatov, p. 178.

of industry. The emphasis now gradually shifted from cultural to economic activities. The union leaders submitted the men's grievances to their employers, who were sometimes persuaded to make concessions by officials acting on instructions from Zubatov. Each success obtained enhanced the unions' prestige. Their members, feeling that the authorities were on their side, grew bolder in their demands. Some persons in authority became alarmed at the pressure which Zubatov's organizations could bring to bear. But in February 1902 he was able to disarm his critics by holding an impressive demonstration to honour the 'Tsar-Liberator' Alexander II, in which some 40,000 to 50,000 people are said to have taken part. This was Zubatov's finest hour: soon afterwards he suffered a major setback. A serious dispute broke out at a factory owned by a French industrialist who complained that he had been threatened by the police with deportation unless he complied with the strikers' demands. The employers made representations to the Government, declaring that Zubatov's unions were a menace to public order. The affair brought to a head the long-standing conflict between Witte's Finance Ministry and the Ministry of the Interior. Soon after his appointment Plehve, himself a former security chief, took steps to tighten the control exercised over the unions by the police. The public lectures were given a more academic flavour; union leaders were instructed to avoid 'misunderstandings' with the employers, and some members deemed politically unreliable were dismissed. The natural consequence was that from the summer of 1902 onwards the police-sponsored unions in Moscow rapidly lost popular support.

Zubatov was now obliged to transfer his attention to the western provinces, where in 1901 a body known as the Independent Jewish Workers' Party had been established under his auspices as a rival to the Marxist Bund. Its leaders, prominent among whom was a Jewish doctor named Shayeveich, laid less emphasis in their propaganda on the merits of absolutism, but, as in Moscow, encouraged the idea that the authorities did not object to labour organizations so long as they refrained from political action. In fact the Independent Party leaders worked closely with certain elements in the administration. Most Jewish workers were hostile to the Independents, but their ideas appealed to some whose interests lay in the field of trade-union work, and who objected to the growing trend towards radicalism in the Bund. There was also a certain amount of common ground between the Independents and the Zionists. The greater degree of political commitment (or 'class consciousness', in Marxist terminology) among workers in the western region, as compared with those in the Moscow area, was shown by the vigorous resistance put up by the Bund to the police-sponsored unions. In Moscow the Social-Democratic leaders, lacking

popular support, restricted themselves to issuing a few leaflets condemning the Zubatov organizations; in the western region the Bund organized counter-demonstrations and sometimes broke up Independent party meetings by violence. But here as elsewhere the Zubatov unions owed their demise less to actions by their left-wing opponents than to differences within the Government. In Odessa an Independent organization led by Shayevich, which succeeded in building up a fairly strong following, helped to touch off the wave of strikes that afflicted southern Russia in the summer of 1903. The authorities held that Zubatov was largely to blame and he was dismissed from Government service.

Despite the fortuitous circumstances attending the rise and fall of the Zubatov movement, there can be little doubt that it was the main phenomenon in Russian labour politics during these years. It is against this background that one has to assess the achievements of the Social Democrats in what is referred to in Party literature, rather misleadingly, as 'the *Iskra* period'. In retrospect it seems that their small clandestine groups did not present a serious threat to the régime. Except in certain areas and at moments of great stress, their hold on the workers' loyalties was still very insecure. Many factories had never seen an agitator; and in those that had their strident calls to revolution often found no echo. Much of the Party's teaching was remote from the day-to-day concerns of the worker at the bench. Nevertheless by the summer of 1903 the tide was beginning to turn. The decisive moment was not, as some Party leaders liked to think, the convening of the second congress of the R.S.D.R.P. (important though this was for other reasons), but the general strike in southern Russia and the failure of the Zubatov experiment.

Zubatov's political philosophy was a curious blend of idealism and unscrupulousness. His cynical assumption that a mass movement could be manipulated from above, by subtle administrative pressure and demagogic propaganda, was characteristic of a leader in some modern totalitarian state. Yet at the same time he retained a naïve archaic view of the powers of absolute monarchy which placed him in the Slavophile-nationalist tradition. He saw all too well the weaknesses in the revolutionary camp; but as a loyal servant of the Tsar he could not bring himself to recognize that the autocracy suffered from equally serious defects. He failed to realize that the policies he advocated could only be put into effect by a strong united government, capable of generating a spirit of ruthless dynamism in the cause of orderly progress. Police unionism by itself was not enough. It smacked of dishonesty. If the Government were to win the confidence of Russian labour—and there seems no intrinsic reason why it should have been unable to do

so—police controls had to be supplemented by a coherent and comprehensive programme of social reform. Neither Nicholas nor any of his cautious advisers were prepared to embark on such a course. Witte, the most forward-looking of the Tsar's ministers, chose to channel his energies in other directions, hoping that in the fullness of time industrialization would of itself solve the country's pressing social problems. The few modest reforms promulgated during 1903 had no popular impact, and the Government was content to drift uncertainly from one expedient to another.

Zubatov's removal from the scene left a void which the left-wing parties naturally did their best to fill. Repressive measures merely stimulated mass discontent. The police unions helped to teach many the advantages that could be derived from organization for industrial ends. Their dissolution was seen as a confession of weakness. It seemed to bear out the truth of the Social Democrats' contention that no serious progress was possible without violent revolution. In a sense the Zubatov experiment demonstrated the bankruptcy of the old order almost as effectively as the Japanese armies were to do one year later. In the summer of 1903 'the Russian crisis', as Milyukov called it,¹ took a sharp turn towards its violent *dénouement*. In the struggle that ensued one of the chief contenders for power was to be the R.S.D.R.P., now reconstituted on authoritarian lines in accordance with the precepts of *Iskra*.

¹ In a course of lectures delivered at Chicago University in 1903, subsequently printed as *Russia and its crisis* (Chicago-London, 1905).

IV

THE GREAT SCHISM

DURING the summer months of 1903 those prominent in the affairs of Russian Social Democracy had their eyes fixed, not on the turbulent cities of the Ukraine, but on Brussels and London. It was here, in July and August of that year, that they held the gathering known to history as the second congress of the R.S.D.R.P. The connexion with the meeting at Minsk five years earlier was purely formal. The object of the second congress was to fashion a party that existed only in name. The *Iskra* group took the initiative in convoking it and dominated the proceedings. Lenin and his colleagues had always insisted that the next congress should be held at a time and place of their own choosing. First it was necessary to defeat those whom they denounced as 'opportunists'. 'Before we can unite,' Lenin had declared in 1900, 'and in order to unite, we must first strictly fence ourselves off; otherwise our unification will be a mere fiction concealing the disunity that exists and preventing it from being overcome.'¹ He did not ask himself whether the Party's unity might not be still more fictitious if the opposition were inadequately represented. For his concept of organization left no room for minority groups. A congress was not a forum for debate and negotiated compromise, but a means of formally registering and consolidating a victor's peace. 'The main thing is to be quite certain that we shall have a safe majority of resolute Iskrists.'²

In practice, *Iskra* acted ruthlessly to frustrate its rivals' efforts to call a congress and ensure that the body entrusted with this function, although outwardly representative, was actually subject to its own control. After the breakdown of the Zurich talks in 1901 the Bund and the old *émigré* League co-operated in a new attempt to hold a meeting in Russia of delegates elected by the local committees. The project caused Lenin considerable concern. F. I. Gurvich (Dan) (1871-1947), a new recruit to *Iskra*'s organization who was to play a leading role in Party affairs, was sent to Białystok, the appointed meeting-place, with instructions to take a stern line. In the event the few delegates who appeared there, in March 1902, agreed readily enough that they would not be justified in constituting their gathering as a congress. Instead, they elected a three-man Organization Committee (O.C.) to

¹ *Lenin*, iv. 40.

² *Ibid.*, xxviii. 176.

make the necessary preparations for such a gathering. Almost immediately afterwards about half those present at Białystok were arrested, including Dan and Yermansky of *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy*, both of whom had been appointed to the new body.¹

The third man, who remained at liberty, was K. Portnoy, the representative of the Bund. It was characteristic of this organization that it should not have thought of utilizing this situation for its own sectional advantage. Throughout the months that followed Portnoy remained inactive, while *Iskra* proceeded to consolidate its position. In August Lenin conferred with some of his agents and decided to establish a new O.C. that would be firmly under *Iskra*'s control.² I. I. Radchenko was sent round the committees to obtain their support. Early in November, after the ground had been thus prepared, a meeting was called at Pskov. It was attended by V. P. Krasnukha, an *Iskra* agent from St. Petersburg, Levin of the *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy* group, and three others. They re-established the O.C. as a body of eight (according to some accounts, nine), a majority of whom were agents of *Iskra*. The presence of the Bundist Portnoy was designed to maintain the pretence that the new O.C. was the heir of the old, although the Pskov meeting was attended by representatives neither of the League nor of the Bund, who had taken the initiative in setting up the first O.C. at Białystok.

The League had no choice but to accept the *fait accompli*. The Bundists were indignant, and suspected that a deliberate effort had been made to exclude them from this all-important organization. The incident did much to inflame the relations between them and *Iskra*, which were already severely strained. Actually Lenin's intention was not to exclude the Bund, but to ensure that its lone representative should be faced with a solid phalanx of Iskristis, and thus be reduced to impotence.³ But this plan could not be realized in full. No sooner was the Pskov meeting over than three of the four new O.C. members who had been present there (as distinct from those *designated* as members) were arrested. The survivor was Levin of *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy*. It was now his duty to fill the vacancies by co-optation. He chose one

¹ Ibid., xxviii. 105-6; *Leninskiy sbornik*, iii. 290; P. Rozenal, 'Vospominaniya o Belostokskoy konferentsii RSDRP', *KiS* (1928), no. 45-46, pp. 47-49.

² *Leninskiy sbornik*, viii. 292-3.

³ It is possible that Lenin's agent P. A. Krasikov misinterpreted his directives and deliberately attempted to exclude the Bund. It was he who sent the message to Vilno inviting the Bund to attend the Pskov conference. This did not specify the purpose of the meeting and was therefore disregarded. Lepeshinsky records that those present at Pskov 'were not inclined to despair at this fact [the absence of a Bundist representative] and firmly resolved to consider the conference legally constituted' (*Na povorote* (Lg., 1925), p. 127; cf. V. P. Makhnovets (Akimov), 'K istorii II-go s'yezda RSDRP', *Minuvshiye gody* (1908), no. 7, pp. 284-5).

of his editorial colleagues, V. N. Rozanov, two women agents whose contacts had been mainly with the southern committees (R. S. Halberstadt and V. M. Alexandrova), and a relatively inexperienced practical worker from the Northern Union (A. M. Stopani). He also regularized the position with regard to the Bund by expressly confirming Portnoy's membership. The result was that of the nine men who now made up the O.C. only three (P. A. Krasikov, Krzhizhanovsky, and Lengnik) could be regarded as wholly loyal to Lenin.

These three formed a fairly compact group within the organization. But so too did the southerners, and it was they who displayed the greatest energy in making the practical arrangements for the congress: Rozanov later calculated that on his tours of the local committees during the winter of 1902-3 he exceeded the circumference of the globe at the Equator.¹ It was not long before tension developed between the southerners and the Leninist trio—particularly with Krasikov, a rough-mannered man who relished his position of authority. The stern line taken against dissident committees aroused some misgivings within the O.C. Stopani, referring to the St. Petersburg affair, warned that 'a tendency to suspect everything, come what may, and to detect heresy where there is none . . . can bring into being a genuine separatism that does not at present exist'.² Alexandrova carried out a veritable *coup d'état* in the committee at Yekaterinoslav. She formed a 'nucleus' of five men, who pressed the rank-and-file members of the organization to repudiate the practice of electing their leaders. Such unsophisticated tactics brought their own reward. At a general meeting the supporters of *Iskra* secured only 3 or 4 votes, while 36 were cast against them. After this, as Levitsky records blandly, 'there could be no thought of the elections to the congress being held by any collective broader than the committee'—i.e. by the *Iskra* nucleus itself.³

A spokesman for the *émigré* League, V. P. Makhnovets (Akimov), later claimed that seventeen local organizations were unjustifiably disfranchised by the O.C., including nine which unsuccessfully appealed against its decisions.⁴ But there is little definite evidence of arbitrary disqualification: the real objection to the practice of the O.C. seems to be that it was too generous in endorsing the claims of local groups that had only dubious rights to send a delegate to the congress. Nor did it take measures to ensure that elections should reflect the opinions of the rank and file. In Moscow only eight persons were present at the

¹ I. N. Moshinsky, in *KiS* (1928), no. 45-46, p. 10; cf. V. N. Rozanov, 'Iz partiynogo proshlogo', in *Nasha zarya* (1913), no. 6, pp. 35ff.

² *PR* (1928), no. 77-78, p. 124.

³ V. O. Levitsky, *Za chetvert' veka*, i (ii). 141-56; cf. *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1933), no. 59, p. 50; *PR* (1926), no. 48, p. 75.

⁴ V. P. Makhnovets (Akimov), p. 285; cf. *Prot. II*, pp. 10-11.

electoral meeting, and of these only five were entitled to vote. 'It was necessary to observe the strictest conspiracy', one of them explained later. 'This was so obvious to the committee that no one had the slightest thought of drawing in broad Party circles when electing delegates.' The latter thus represented no one but the members of the committee. The writer adds that 'the same could apparently be said of most towns represented at the congress'.¹ The rules adopted by the O.C. specified that, in order to qualify, a committee had to have been in existence for a year, but there was nothing to prevent ephemeral groups from claiming a spurious antiquity. The Donets valley Miners' Union was permitted to send a delegate to the congress despite the fact that its headquarters were outside the area (in a newspaper office at Rostov-on-Don) and that its existence was almost as well hidden from the Donets miners as it was from the eyes of the police; it claimed a following of only 400. The most glaring disparity was that, whereas almost any of the Russian committees, however small, could obtain permission to send a delegate (in all there were 32 men from 19 local organizations), the Jewish Bund, which could boast tens of thousands of members, had only five delegates from its central institutions. The so-called Economists were reduced to three representatives.

Whether the congress reflected opinion in the Russian committees at the time it is difficult to say. It is probably true that the views of most Social Democrats in Russia, in so far as they concerned themselves with such matters, were closer to those of *Iskra* than of the now defunct *Rabocheye Delo*. But it is also true to say that the second congress of the R.S.D.R.P. was deliberately packed in the hope of securing whole-hearted endorsement of *Iskra's* line.

Whatever qualms Lenin initially felt about the reliability of the O.C., he seemed to have ample reason for satisfaction with its performance. Nevertheless he was not disposed to take chances. As the delegates to the congress arrived from Russia, they were invited, wherever possible, to stay with him in a Geneva suburb. Here he steeled their loyalties and coaxed them into adopting a firm irreconcilable attitude toward any idea that smacked of 'opportunism'. It seemed as though no stone had been left unturned in an effort to ensure that the congress would pass off without mishap, and that the party it was to resuscitate would be cast in the *Iskra* mould. But Krupskaya records that Lenin was so worried that his nerves began to show the strain.² The cause of his anxiety had hitherto been a well-kept secret—although it was revealed in confidence to the delegates who attended the talks

¹ S. Chernomordik, in *PR* (1923), no. 14, p. 603.

² *Vospominaniya o Lenine* (M., 1932), pp. 67, 73.

on the outskirts of Geneva.¹ This was that the six editors of *Iskra*, who presented such a firm monolithic front to the outside world, had throughout been deeply divided among themselves. Lenin knew the unpredictable behaviour of his colleagues could jeopardize the success of the enterprise on which his heart was set.

The conflicts between them were partly due to differences of personal temperament, but mainly to the unnatural intellectual climate in which they lived and worked. Lenin and Plekhanov were both inordinately self-righteous and stubborn men, loath to compromise and sensitive to criticism; and to a lesser extent their fellow-editors suffered from the same faults. Their burning zeal caused them to lose their sense of proportion: they saw themselves as the appointed leaders of the great proletarian army of the future, whose ideological banner it was their task to keep unsullied. Any error, even on an abstract point of doctrine seemingly far removed from questions of practical politics, had at once to be corrected. Each success registered by *Iskra* enhanced their determination to be worthy of their solemn responsibilities.

One might have expected their controversies to have centred on Lenin's views on Party organization, and the high-handed methods which he and his agents adopted towards dissidents. But this, significantly enough, was not the case. An examination of *Iskra* reveals only the minutest differences of emphasis on such matters between Lenin and his colleagues, who gave him *carte blanche* to develop his views. They confined themselves to half-hearted remonstrances in their private correspondence. Axelrod thought that Lenin's article 'Where shall we Begin?', in which he first developed his élitist concepts, suffered from 'diplomatic weaknesses', but gave it general approval.² Even when Lenin went on to expound his theory in categorical form in his pamphlet *What is to be Done?*, Axelrod failed to realize what was at stake. Later he confessed sadly to Plekhanov: 'I put my own construction on his words. When reading the proofs I became convinced that you had understood him better than I had. On the whole [Lenin's] work appears to me to have glaring omissions and to be a sort of *va-banque*.'³ At the time Plekhanov was almost equally blind, and was content to note in passing that parts of the book were likely to cause alarm.⁴ Subsequently he too repented of having failed 'to expose [Lenin's] theoretical mischief to a bright light'.⁵ But the damage had been done. Potresov was the only one of Lenin's colleagues who told him directly of his objections before his work was published, and

¹ A. Stopani, in *PR* (1926), no. 48, p. 89. Krupskaya (op. cit., p. 67) denies this.

² *Pis'ma*, pp. 41-42.

³ *Perepiska*, ii. 155.

⁴ *Leninskiy sbornik*, iii. 408.

⁵ *Plekhanov*, xiii. 138; see below, p. 147.

even he did not press his arguments home.¹ None of them realized that by allowing Lenin to bring the whole Social-Democratic movement under *Iskra*'s control they were jeopardizing the prospects of Party unity.

It was also characteristic that the disagreements between the six editors should first flare up over the tactics to be adopted by a party that was not yet in existence. The initial conflicts over the line to be taken towards Struve² were symptomatic of an underlying difference of approach towards liberalism as a political force. However sharply Plekhanov or Axelrod criticized the *zemstvo* men for their moderation or weakness, they recognized their right to exist. They saw them as potential, if reluctant, allies in the common struggle against absolutism, whereas for Lenin they were first and foremost 'bourgeois' and as such class enemies. His attitude, as we have seen, stiffened during 1901 and 1902: if he still extended a grudging welcome to the nascent force of Russian liberalism, it was because he thought that the day would soon come when it would accept the hegemony of Social Democracy. This swing to the left did not pass unnoticed by his colleagues. The vehemence of his article attacking Struve for his 'Hannibal's vow' to fight for liberty aroused their misgivings—not least because *Iskra* had agreed to co-operate in publishing Struve's pamphlet. Plekhanov sent Lenin a reproving letter:

We should not abuse the liberals as a whole: this is tactless. We must appeal from the bad liberal to the good one, even though we may not believe in the latter's existence. . . . We should repeatedly make it clear that it is the pseudo-liberals who are bad, but that liberalism as such deserves great respect.

To Martov he wrote that it was a question of 'a repetition of the differences between Tulin and Beltov'—an allusion to his verbal exchange with Lenin in 1895. In deference to this criticism Lenin toned down his article. Axelrod remained dissatisfied at the extent of the changes made and thought him excessively stubborn.³ In fact Lenin emerged as the victor in this dispute. He succeeded all too well in ensuring that *Iskra* reflected his own view of Russian liberalism rather than that of his colleagues.

A few months later the six men found themselves engaged on the delicate task of compiling a draft Party programme, which was to be published in *Iskra* and then submitted to the impending congress for endorsement. Plekhanov's version evoked sharp criticism from Lenin. He produced a rival draft, to which Plekhanov in turn raised objections. If it were accepted by the group, he warned, 'there will be something

¹ *Leninskiy sbornik*, iii. 286.

² See above, p. 70.

³ *Leninskiy sbornik*, iii. 203-4, 213, 248, 408.

in the nature of a new schism'.¹ The central point at issue was the extent to which Russia had advanced along the path of capitalist development. Plekhanov spoke of capitalism 'becoming more and more the dominant means of production'. Lenin commented: 'This definitely does not go far enough. It [capitalism] has already *become* dominant. . . . We must not allow the slightest vagueness here. If capitalism has not yet become "dominant", then we might as well hold up [the development of] Social Democracy.' Plekhanov insisted that the important differences between Russia and the advanced countries of the West should not be overlooked.² His formula implied that in Russia antagonism between the bourgeoisie and proletariat had not yet developed to such an extent as to hinder them from collaborating, under the Social Democrats' hegemony, to eliminate the vestiges of 'feudalism'. Lenin's formula implied that the Party should struggle simultaneously against both the old economic order and the new. It showed once again that he did not respect the traditional concept of a revolution in two stages.

Another point of controversy concerned an issue still more academic, but yet of portentous significance: the role that various social groups would play in the ultimate proletarian revolution. The accepted view was that at this juncture in history the industrial workers would have come to enjoy the sympathy and support of certain non-proletarian or 'petty-bourgeois' groups in town or country—for if this were not so, the realization of socialism would have had to be postponed until such time as these intermediate groups had been absorbed by the proletariat, giving the latter enough strength to act alone. Lenin laid particular emphasis on the point that the proletariat was the sole consistently revolutionary class. 'Of course it is desirable to attract all the petty producers [he argued]. But we know that they form a separate class. . . . We must first fence ourselves off from everyone else, distinguish the proletariat singly and exclusively, and *then* declare that it liberates, calls and invites everybody.' The natural political sympathies of these petty-bourgeois groups, he maintained, lay with the reformists or even the reactionaries. 'Let no one say that things have changed in the half-century that has elapsed since the *Communist Manifesto*. Precisely in this respect nothing has changed.'³ Plekhanov, on the other hand, considered that conditions had altered radically since the days when Marx had dismissed the peasants as incorrigible reactionaries. 'I think that, the further capitalism develops in the more advanced countries, the greater will be the number of petty bourgeois and peasants with little land who will be forced to go over to the side of the proletariat. We are not obliged to think like Marx in circumstances where Marx

¹ *Perepiska*, ii. 166. ² *Leninskiy sbornik*, ii. 64, 84, 93. ³ *Lenin*, v. 41, 28–29.

himself would have thought differently.' If Lenin really believed that a socialist revolution could be accomplished by the proletariat alone, 'then I see a disagreement here on a matter of principle'.¹

But what Plekhanov failed to see was that Lenin, in minimizing the likely extent of non-proletarian support for a socialist revolution, was by no means resigning himself to the postponement of this eventuality to the distant future. On the contrary, he was soon to develop the idea of a proletarian-peasant alliance as a decisive factor permitting a drastic acceleration of the revolutionary tempo. But their alliance was not visualized as a partnership between equals: the urban workers were to realize a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', which would ensure that their peasant supporters remained in a strictly subordinate position. He explained:

If we really knew for certain that the petty bourgeoisie would support the proletariat when the latter carries out its revolution, then there would be no need to talk of 'dictatorship', because in that case we should be assured of such an overwhelming majority that we should get on very well without one. . . . Recognition of the need for a dictatorship of the proletariat is closely and inseparably connected with the dictum in the *Communist Manifesto* that the proletariat is the sole really revolutionary class.²

Plekhanov was also convinced of the necessity for proletarian dictatorship. But whereas he visualized this in the traditional Marxist sense as the rule of the masses, Lenin had added a distinctive note of his own. He was already thinking in terms of the rule of a minority over the vast majority of the population.

The more 'kindness' we show to the petty producer in the practical part of our programme [he wrote], the stricter we ought to be in the theoretical part towards these unreliable and hypocritical elements in society. 'There,' we shall say, 'if you accept our point of view, you shall have all manner of kindness. If you don't, well . . . when the dictatorship comes, we shall say of you: 'It's no use wasting words where one has got to use force.'

At this point Zasulich added the marginal comment: 'Upon millions of people? Just you try it!'³ Little did she imagine that she would live to see Lenin and his Party 'try it' after October 1917.

Zasulich, with the aid of Axelrod and Martov, succeeded in persuading Plekhanov and Lenin to come to a compromise. A meeting was held at Zurich in April 1902, at which an agreed text, based on Plekhanov's draft, was hammered out. Lenin refrained from any public criticism, but demonstrated his displeasure by absenting himself from the talks and making it harder for the 'old guard' to influence the editorial policy

¹ *Leninskiy sbornik*, ii. 94-95.

² *Lenin*, v. 29.

³ *Lenin*, v. 31; *Leninskiy sbornik*, ii. 83.

of *Iskra*. The paper could no longer be published in Munich, since the police were becoming too inquisitive. Axelrod suggested a move to Switzerland, but Lenin chose London—‘the end of the world’, as Axelrod thought. The decision tacitly acknowledged that the ‘new schism’ envisaged by Plekhanov had become a fact. For a time Plekhanov refused even to correspond with Lenin who, he said, ‘infuriates me with his narrow-minded views’. With every day that passed he was becoming more and more convinced that ‘between him and us [the “old guard”] there is a difference, and a most important one, in *Weltanschauung*’.¹

Axelrod, still drawn to Lenin by ties of personal friendship, tried to pour oil on the troubled waters. But the letter in which he reported the outcome of the Zurich meeting contained the opening shot in another argument that was to widen the breach still further. On this occasion the apple of discord was somewhat less intangible: the attitude to be adopted towards the peasantry in the immediate future. Differences of emphasis had been apparent from the start. It was Lenin, as we have seen, who took the initiative in formulating *Iskra*’s agrarian programme. Among his colleagues the notion of rendering support to the peasant movement met with a lukewarm response. Lenin developed his ideas in an article entitled ‘The Agrarian Programme of Russian Social Democracy’, two drafts of which were subjected to detailed critical examination by his colleagues. They were concerned less with the notorious *otrezki* than with the question of possible nationalization of the land. Lenin did not agree with the S.R.s in thinking that such a measure could lead to socialism, but he did consider that it would constitute a great step forward.

In the demand for a ‘black re-partition’ [he wrote], the utopian idea of making petty peasant production general and permanent is reactionary, but there is also . . . a revolutionary aspect: the desire to sweep away all relics of the feudal order by a peasant insurrection. . . . Nationalization of the land . . . does indeed go beyond the demand for the return of the *otrezki*, and in principle we entirely share it. At a certain moment in the revolution we shall of course not hesitate to advance it.²

His fellow-editors adhered to the traditional view that the peasants’ desire for a ‘black re-partition’ was as much a protest against the new order as against the old. Martov declared unequivocally: ‘Social Democracy regards this demand primarily as an attempt to invest the bourgeois call for “equalization” with a socialist halo.’ As for nationalization, at the moment it would have ‘a distinctly reactionary character’. It was acceptable ‘only as the immediate prologue to socialization of all the means of production’.³ Plekhanov roundly condemned the idea:

¹ *Perepiska*, ii. 166.

² *Lenin*, v. 113.

³ *Iskra*, no. 27 (1 November 1902); *Leninskiy sbornik*, iii. 384.

it would place tremendous power in the hands of the State, which it might well use to infringe the peasants' interests.¹ He returned Lenin's manuscript with more than a hundred suggestions for further amendments. 'When Vladimir Ilyich saw them', Krupskaya relates, 'he flew off the rails and rushed hither and thither.'² He composed a sharply-worded letter of protest to Plekhanov in which he threatened to break off personal relations, but then decided not to send it. Zasulich and Martov once again acted as peacemakers. Plekhanov was prevailed upon to apologize and was given space in *Iskra* to condemn the idea of land nationalization, while all references to this were deleted from the text of Lenin's article.³

It was at this point that Lenin seems to have decided to insure himself against further such humiliations at the hands of his colleagues by engineering changes in the editorial board of *Iskra*, although some months elapsed before he made his next move. In October 1902 his team obtained a powerful reinforcement in the person of Trotsky, who not long before had escaped from exile in eastern Siberia and had made his way to London. Lenin valued his very considerable journalistic talents, and also the fact that he was bitterly opposed to Plekhanov, with whom he had quarrelled shortly after his arrival in Europe. The antagonism between the two men was to prove lasting, although the reasons for it are none too clear. Plekhanov resented the younger man's conceit and plain speaking. It may well be, as Trotsky himself and his biographer suggest, that he sensed in him a rival whose gifts were somewhat similar to his own and who might succeed him as the leading figure in Russian Social Democracy. Alternatively, he may simply have dismissed him as a mere creature of Lenin, one of the many obedient and respectful acolytes by whom he was habitually surrounded. However this may be, in March 1903, when Lenin formally proposed to his fellow-editors that Trotsky be co-opted to the board of *Iskra*, Plekhanov realized that this was a threat to his own position of pre-eminence, symbolized by his right to cast a double vote, and strongly insisted that the idea be dropped.⁴ After this incident the partnership between the six editors was little more than a fiction. Lenin eyed his colleagues with a mixture of suspicion and contempt. Within a few weeks he was to have a fresh opportunity to carry out his plans—but only at the cost of destroying the unity of the Party which he had worked so hard to achieve.

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¹ See below, p. 294.

² *Vospominaniya o Lenine* (M., 1932), p. 51.

³ *Leninskiy sbornik*, iii. 430; *Plekhanov*, xii. 235-7; *Perepiska*, ii. 175.

⁴ *Leninskiy sbornik*, iv. 221-2; L. D. Trotsky, *Moya zhizn'* (Berlin, 1930), ii. 177-81; I. Deutscher, *The prophet armed: Trotsky, 1879-1921* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 62ff.

The long-awaited second congress of the R.S.D.R.P. opened in Brussels on 30 July 1903 (N.S.). Sympathetic Belgian socialist leaders helped the organizers to make the practical arrangements for it, and in particular to find suitable meeting-places. The venue continually had to be changed in order to distract the attention of Russian police spies. Despite these precautions the delegates' presence in the city became known. Not all of them were experienced in conspiratorial lore: it was said that their secret leaked because one of the delegates from the Don, who had a fine voice, entertained his friends to an impromptu concert before a carelessly opened window. After a few days the proceedings had to be interrupted and the whole group set out for England, where immigration formalities were at that time virtually non-existent. No obstacles were placed in their way. On the contrary: according to one delegate a police constable was posted outside the door of the hall where they met to ensure their protection.¹ Despite the simplicity of their surroundings—in Brussels one of their sessions was held in a vermin-ridden warehouse, which they were obliged to vacate in haste—those present did their best to acquit themselves with a due sense of the historic significance of the occasion. Indeed, so seriously did they take themselves that there was an air of unreality about the entire proceedings. It was as though the delegates deliberately set out to ignore common-sense considerations and the lessons of their own experience. It was perhaps no coincidence that all but three of them were intellectuals. Apart from two sessions in which they reported on the activities of their committees, their deliberations were concerned wholly with abstractions and generalities—mainly the Party's programme and organizational statute. Scarcely a word was said about the practical problems involved in winning the confidence of the inarticulate urban masses, or the manifold other difficulties that would concern the delegates most immediately once they returned to their homes. The real questions were drowned in a flood of oratory. No point was too trivial for it to be omitted from the agenda—a formidable document containing no less than twenty items. No use was made of the procedural devices necessary for efficient control of a debate. Every speaker demanded, and was granted, the right to be heard. Yet the funds that enabled the congress to be held were limited. After twenty-four days an enforced stop had to be put to the proceedings, although many important questions had still not been properly ventilated. In defence of the congress it could be said that it succeeded in outwitting the police, for all the delegates returned safely to Russia. For this the credit was due to the Bund, which had an efficient network of agents

¹ A. Shotman, in *PR* (1927), no. 60, pp. 229ff.; I. N. Moshinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

along the western border. However, it received small thanks for its pains.

The five delegates from the Bund and the three so-called Economists faced a *bloc* of Iskrist: the *émigré* leaders with 8 votes, and 31 of the 32 delegates from local committees. But among the latter were 8 delegates (with 10 votes), mainly from the Ukraine, whose allegiance was somewhat doubtful.¹ Lenin was later to refer to them contemptuously as 'the swamp'. If this group united with the Bund and the Economists, they would have 18 votes. If they could secure another 8 votes, they would have a majority. In this situation lay the drama of the events that now unfolded. Could the opponents of *Iskra*, weak and divided as they were, undermine the loyalties of sufficient Iskrist to turn the scales in their favour? At the outset the likelihood of this coming about seemed remote indeed. The democratic rump was unskilled in the political arts and had no clear objectives. It was on the defensive and did not consciously set out to win control of the assembly. The Iskrist, on the other hand, presented a seemingly impregnable front.

The southerners soon gave proof of their readiness to act independently. On the second day the delegates discussed an application by Ryazanov and his little group of *émigrés* for permission to attend. The Iskrist were naturally opposed. But Levin of *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy*, who had just arrived from Russia, interrupted the proceedings to confer privately with five fellow-members of the O.C. He succeeded in swinging all of them except Krasikov (who protested energetically) round to the view that an invitation should be sent—apparently on the grounds that Ryazanov had some support in Odessa, where he had once worked. Among those who voted in favour was Alexandrova, although previously she had declared that she was opposed to the proposal. Such vacillation made Lenin and his closest supporters—the 'hard' Iskrist, as they were later to call themselves—deeply indignant. It confirmed them in their suspicions as to the loyalty of the southerners on the O.C. A long and rather pointless wrangle ensued over the rights and wrongs of this body's action, during the course of which a Bundist resolution mustered as many as sixteen votes. But on the point at issue

¹ Levin and Rozanov of *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy*, two delegates from Kharkov, one from Nikolayev, one from Rostov-on-Don, one from the Donets Miners' Union (I. N. Moshinsky), and one from Moscow. The high figure for the orthodox *émigrés* was obtained by granting independent representation to the Foreign League (Lenin), *Iskra* (Martov), and the Liberation of Labour group (Plekhanov, Deych). Among those present with consultative votes were the three remaining editors of *Iskra*, two members of the O.C. who had no mandate from a local committee, and two representatives of the S.D.K.P.L. The latter played no part in the proceedings, and left after talks on re-unification broke down over the old stumbling-block of Polish independence.

the will of the majority prevailed, and the errant Ryazanov received no summons to the assembly.¹

For three more days the preliminary sparring continued. Lenin had insisted that the question of relations with the Bund be taken as the second item on the agenda. Evidently he hoped that their delegates would swiftly be expelled from the hall, so lessening the threat to *Iskra's* pretensions.² The ostensible cause of this hostility was the Bund's demand, dating back to its fourth congress in 1901, that the R.S.D.R.P. be organized on federal lines, and the relations between its constituent parts carried on as between equals. This, it was held, was the only way in which the principle of autonomy, conceded at Minsk in 1898, could be implemented. The Bund further claimed the right to be regarded as 'sole representative of the Jewish proletariat', without any territorial limitations being placed on its activity. At its fifth congress in June 1903 it had formulated these demands as an ultimatum, threatening to secede from the R.S.D.R.P. unless they were granted.³ The Iskristes argued vehemently that if this request were complied with the Party would break up into national components. The delegates from Transcaucasia in particular warned against any concessions to the principle of federalism, since their own successes were based on the premiss that workers of several nationalities could combine in joint organizations to promote the Party's ideas. This argument did not, however, take account of the situation in western and north-western Russia, where fragmentation along national lines was already the rule among Social Democrats, whatever their principles might dictate. None of the speakers dared to broach the emotion-laden issue that lurked beneath the surface: whether the assimilation of Russian Jewry was still practicable in a country that had just witnessed the Kishinev pogrom. Was it really true, as the delegate from Baku claimed, that 'the whole Russian proletariat is just as interested in abolishing [anti-Semitic] discriminatory legislation as is the Jewish proletariat'⁴—or was this merely an article of faith? From time to

¹ *Prot. II*, pp. 33–40; *Lenin*, vi. 168–73; Pavlovich [P. A. Krasikov], *Pis'mo k tovarishcham o II-om s'yezde RSDRP* (Geneva, 1904), pp. 7–8.

² A few months earlier he had urged on the O.C. the need for all the delegates to be convinced that no concessions whatever should be made to the Bund. 'Only firm resolution on our part to go to all lengths, to expel the Bund from the Party, will be sure to make it yield.' To Krzhizhanovsky he wrote: 'At the congress—struggle, struggle up to a schism, at any price' (*Lenin*, xxviii. 179–80).

³ For the Bund's arguments, see *V s'yezd Vserossiyskogo Yevreyskogo Rabocheho Soyuza* . . . ([London], 1903); *Autonomiya ili federatsiya?* ([London], 1903); Lenin's reactions are in *Soch.*, v. 236–40, 245–9. This question has been studied in detail by H. Shukman in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation: 'The relations between the Jewish Bund and the RSDRP, 1897–1903'; cf. especially pp. 163–90.

⁴ *Prot. II*, p. 62.

time the underlying tension burst forth in angry exchanges. Trotsky asserted that he had as much right as the Bundist leaders to speak for Jewish workers. Liber, the Bund's principal spokesman, countered by asking him how much experience he had had of work among Jewish, as distinct from Russian, workers. Surely they had not all forgotten the role played by the Bund in the formative years of the Party's growth? But these pleas fell upon stony ground. To most supporters of *Iskra* the Bund's achievements had long since been outweighed by its tolerance of nationalistic tendencies. It did not enter their minds that there might be an element of nationalism in their own attitude, which led many of them to make remarks highly critical of their Jewish comrades.

The three days of debate succeeded only in poisoning the atmosphere. No one changed his point of view. The Bundists were isolated, even the Economist trio siding with *Iskra*. But the motion under discussion was only a procedural one, and the Bundist delegates, instead of leaving the congress at once, waited until their draft statute had been formally turned down before taking this drastic step. By that time the situation at the congress had radically changed.

The delegates next turned to a discussion of *Iskra's* draft programme. Martynov, for the *émigré* League, came at once to the heart of the matter by launching a spirited attack on Lenin's theory of 'consciousness' and 'spontaneity', as presented in *What is to be Done?* This, he argued, was contrary to Marxist doctrine. There was no need for the Social Democrats to fear spontaneous action by the masses: this advanced the cause and was the very secret of their strength. Lenin's theory 'opens the door to other dangerous tactical errors, [and] cleaves a deep chasm between the leading elements of the movement and the labouring masses, between the activity of a compact party and the broad struggle of the working class'. It was a sign of the Party's immaturity that its leaders should have been caught off their guard by the awakening of the masses and should have responded to it by jumping from one extreme to another. The new programme, instead of reflecting the excesses of a bygone era, 'should be formulated with the same objectivity as the programmes of the advanced Social-Democratic parties of Europe'.¹ Akimov added a touch of venom to these barbs. The main thesis of *What is to be Done?*, he declared, 'completely contradicts everything that Plekhanov has written in his commentaries [on the programme], and I am convinced that Plekhanov does not agree with Lenin'. His remark was greeted with laughter: evidently he was a party to the secret. Plekhanov replied: 'I am not going to be separated from Lenin, and I hope he does not intend to separate from

¹ *Prot. II*, pp. 118-19

me.' The minutes record that 'Lenin, laughing, shakes his head negatively.'¹

These arguments made little impression upon the massed cohorts of *Iskra*. Lenin sought to convey an impression of reasonableness.

We all know now that the Economists bent the stick to one side. To make it straight again it had to be bent to the other side, and this is what I did. I am sure that Russian Social Democracy will always straighten the stick whenever it is bent by any kind of opportunism, and that our stick will therefore always be the straightest and the readiest for action.²

But what guarantee was there against the Party leaders engaging in any further 'bending of the stick'? Akimov announced that he had made a careful study of the programmes of Social-Democratic parties in other countries and compared them with *Iskra's* draft.

I found that on almost every point the draft deviates from all the other programmes, sometimes in substance and sometimes in phrasing. Comparing all these deviations, I noticed that they have all been made in the same direction, are permeated by the same tendency—to deny the proletariat the significance of a creative force in the development of Social-Democracy, to minimize its active role.

He proposed more than twenty amendments.³ The general feeling was that he was merely trying to obstruct the proceedings, and the congress passed on from the programme's theoretical preamble to the practical demands it contained.

The 'programme-minimum', as it was familiarly known, held few surprises in store. The immediate political objective of the Party was 'the overthrow of tsarist autocracy and its replacement by a democratic republic, the constitution of which should assure . . . the autocracy of the people, i.e. the concentration of all supreme State power in the hands of a unicameral legislative assembly of the people's representatives'. Elections were to be general, equal and direct; there was to be extensive local autonomy; full civil rights were to be assured; national minorities were to have the right of self-determination; the regular army was to be replaced by a people's militia; the Church was to be separated from the State and the schools from the Church; and there was to be free compulsory education for children of both sexes to the age of 16. All indirect taxation was to be abolished, and a progressive income and inheritance tax system introduced. Industrial workers

¹ Ibid., pp. 126, 138.

² Ibid., p. 136.

³ Ibid., p. 174. One of his points was that *Iskra's* draft invariably mentioned the word 'Party' in the nominative case and the word 'proletariat' in the accusative. This aroused a good deal of merriment, but was perhaps a less superficial argument than it seemed at the time.

were to adhere to an eight-hour day; a State system of old age and accident insurance was to be introduced; the factory inspectorate was to be improved and the workers themselves were to participate in supervising hygienic conditions, in running labour exchanges, and so on.

The very magnitude of this list of reforms showed that it was more in the nature of a formal manifesto than a concrete programme which its authors really intended to implement. They were less concerned with the practical feasibility of these demands in the Russia of 1903 than with their value as a weapon of agitation. More than anything else the Social Democrats feared being tarred with the reformist brush. It was characteristic that the demands made on behalf of the industrial workers should be prefaced by the remark that they were needed 'to preserve the working class from physical and moral degeneration and to develop its capacity to struggle for its emancipation'. It was apparently thought sheer sentimentality to say that these reforms were desirable for their own sake.

The delegates were well aware of the formal character of the Party programme and it did not lead to lively debate. Only two incidental points aroused their passions. One was the question whether a separate demand should be included to guarantee every citizen the right to speak his own language. This was advocated by Liber of the Bund, and supported by Levin and another delegate from the Ukraine. They urged the Party to demonstrate clearly that it had no sympathy for measures of 'russification'. Once again the bogey of nationalism raised its head. A vote showed the delegates split evenly, with 23 in favour and 23 against. Eventually another motion endorsing the idea, sponsored by the Transcaucasian leader Zhordaniya, was passed by a margin of one vote.¹

The other item that aroused heat was the proposal, advanced by Plekhanov's old associate D. Ginsburg (Koltsov), that the Party should declare itself in favour of the future national assembly meeting for a two-year term, 'since this would be an occasion for frequent agitation'. This was seconded by the southerner Rozanov, although on rather different grounds: that 'it would help to enforce the deputies' sense of responsibility to the people'. This affirmation of democratic principle led V. E. Mandelberg, a deputy from Siberia, to question the basis

¹ *Prot. II*, pp. 185-7. Lenin later emphasized the significance of this vote as the first occasion on which the congress split into loyal, or 'hard', Iskrists and so-called 'opportunists' (*Soch.*, vi. 176-82). This was somewhat misleading, since in fact the division was between those who were and were not willing to take national sentiment into account. Among the delegates who voted for Zhordaniya's resolution were three fellow-Georgians who later became Bolsheviks, while the 'hard' group included six incipient Mensheviks.

of the Party's commitment to democracy as such. He expressed his own view in forthright terms:

Are we to subordinate our future policy to these or those basic democratic values, or should all democratic principles be subordinated exclusively to the advantage of our Party? I am definitely in favour of the latter. There are no democratic principles that we ought not to subordinate to the interests of our Party. (Exclamations: 'even personal inviolability?') Yes, even personal inviolability! As a party of social revolution . . . we should approach democratic principles wholly from the standpoint of the most rapid realization of this aim. . . .¹

Neither before nor after was Mandelberg distinguished for his extremism. His call was essentially one for frankness: everyone should know what the Party really stood for. In the fury that ensued this aspect of the question was lost sight of.

Plekhanov intervened to endorse Mandelberg's stand, and to propound the maxim *salus revolutionis suprema lex*. It was 'hypothetically imaginable' that on the morrow of the revolution the Social Democrats, despite their commitment to universal suffrage, might find it necessary to restrict the electoral rights of the 'upper classes'. The same utilitarian criterion should be adopted with regard to the duration of a parliamentary session: 'If the people in a wave of revolutionary enthusiasm should elect a very good parliament, a sort of *chambre introuvable*, we should try to turn it into a Long Parliament, but if the elections proved a failure we would have to try to dissolve it, not after two years, but if possible after two weeks.' This was greeted both with applause and catcalls. Among those who expressed their strong disapproval was Levin, who rose to point out that 'the laws of war are one thing and constitutional laws something else; we are writing our programme in the expectation of a constitution'. Ginsburg's amendment was passed.²

The incident showed once again that some Iskrist delegates were prepared to resist their leaders' more extreme authoritarian tendencies, while others were prepared to sacrifice their democratic scruples upon the altar of Party loyalty. Many years later Lenin was to quote Plekhanov's remarks in defence of his own action in dissolving the Russian Constituent Assembly. At the time nearly all members of the Party accepted the concept of proletarian dictatorship without questioning its implications. One of its few critics was the stalwart Akimov. What, he asked, was meant by the term 'autocracy of the people'? If, as he assumed, it referred to the state of affairs that would result after the 'bourgeois-democratic revolution', 'how can this be reconciled with the demand for a dictatorship of the proletariat: are we to achieve the

¹ Ibid., p. 181.

² Ibid., p. 182.

autocracy of the people only to renounce it?'¹ In a pamphlet which he published shortly afterwards he argued that the result would be similar to the Jacobin terror of 1793: 'it would be a dictatorship of the revolutionary government *over* the proletariat—for the sake of saving it from the exploiters, to be sure'. It would lead to the extinction of individual liberties and the substitution of one form of despotism for another. Given the assumptions of *What is to be Done?*, it would mean the violent suppression, not only of counter-revolutionary movements organized by dispossessed bourgeois, but also of spontaneous movements from within the proletariat.² Had he developed this view before the forum of the congress, his melancholy warning might have become as well known as an oft-cited (and less perceptive) dictum delivered not long afterwards by Trotsky. Even so it may be doubted whether it could have had any immediate practical effect: *Iskra's* machine was too powerful.

The only part of its draft programme that aroused serious dissent was the section advancing demands on behalf of the peasants. This was opposed from several quarters: by the advocates of a 'black re-partition', and by those who feared that this would be a reactionary development. Others criticized the intellectualism that motivated the proposal for return of the *otrezki*. But in the event even this clause was passed by a handsome majority. The programme as a whole was then put to the vote. All were in favour except Akimov.

The debate had lasted for more than four days. Everyone present felt that a turning-point had been reached in the Party's history. Plekhanov rose to the occasion. 'The question that has preoccupied us for so long', he said, 'has been settled, and we can say with justifiable pride that the programme we have adopted will give our proletariat a durable and dependable weapon in its struggle against its enemies.' But it was Akimov who really had the last word. 'The ideological struggle that has been carried on in our Party hitherto', he remarked, 'is not over. It will continue on another plane and with a different grouping of forces.'³

Everyone at the congress appreciated the significance of the forthcoming debate on Party organization. While still in Brussels the delegates had endorsed *Iskra's* position as the official newspaper ('Central Organ' (C.O.), in Party jargon). On their arrival in London they heard Lenin present his draft statute. This provided for a complex

¹ *Prot. II*, p. 254.

² V. P. Makhnovets (Akimov), *K voprosu o rabotakh II-go s'yezda* (Geneva, 1904), pp. 38, 41. For biographical details of Akimov, see N. Valentinov, *Vstrechi s Leninym* (N.Y., 1953), p. 179.

³ *Prot. II*, pp. 258, 315.

system of three interlocking bodies at the summit of the Party's governing hierarchy. Southerners and Bundists questioned the practicability of these arrangements, which also appeared to contravene the much-vaunted principle of maximum centralization. Lenin's draft required the congress to elect, not only a Central Committee (C.C.) and a C.O.—one to give practical and the other ideological leadership—but also an institution to be known as the Council: a five-man body, with two members from the C.C. and C.O. and an impartial chairman. Its functions were defined somewhat vaguely: it was to settle conflicts between the C.C. and C.O., yet it was to be more than a mere arbitration tribunal; on the other hand, Lenin strongly opposed a suggestion by the southerners that it should be invested with complete authority over the Party. Both the C.C. and C.O. were to have the right to co-opt new members, but such decisions had to be unanimous, and either could veto co-optations by the other. Finally, the C.C. was given extensive rights over the local committees.

During the debate Martov gave strong and apparently sincere support to these proposals. He expressed reservations only about two minor points: he thought the fifth member of the Council should be chosen by his four colleagues, rather than by the congress; and he felt that a majority of two-thirds or four-fifths should suffice for the approval of co-optations. Thereupon the draft statute was referred to a commission of five Iskristis, among whom were Lenin, Martov, and two southerners.¹

By the time this commission reported four days later Lenin and Martov were in open disagreement. Even now the reasons for this historic breach between the two men are somewhat obscure, for they both took pains to conceal or misrepresent their actual motives. The decisive impulse appears to have been given by discussions, not in the statute commission, but in an informal group known as the 'Iskra organization'. This consisted of sixteen delegates, among them all six editors and a number of their most reliable agents; it acted as a sort of unofficial steering committee.² They first came together to discuss the affair of the invitation to Ryazanov. During the four-day existence of the statute commission they appear to have held two further meetings, at which they endeavoured to agree on a 'slate' of C.C. members which could then be presented to the congress for formal endorsement. This necessarily involved consideration of the personal qualifications of possible candidates—a rather delicate matter that demanded more tact than these rigid men of ideas possessed. One faction headed by Lenin took a strongly negative view of the southerners, and in particular of

¹ Ibid., pp. 167, 174. Lenin's draft is in *Soch.*, vi. 12–13; see also *Leninskiy sbornik*, vi. 42–47.

² For its composition, see *Lenin*, vi. 434 (n. 84).

Alexandrova; another faction, led by Martov, considered that they had given adequate proof of their loyalty and therefore had every right to be represented on the C.C. For Lenin there could be no question of the Party's new leadership reflecting different shades of opinion: it had to be kept firmly under *Iskra's* control. But for Martov the establishment of the new institutions marked the dawn of a new era, in which the 'emergency measures' applied in the past could be discarded. He seems to have reasoned that once the Party was legally constituted the petty struggle for power between rival groups would be an anachronism; since *Iskra's* position would now be assured it could afford to show greater tolerance towards those whose point of view varied only imperceptibly from its own. This was not simply magnanimity, but political common sense: the soundest basis for the new Party would be one that gave the southerners a due share of power, for the prolongation of a 'state of siege' within the Party could only create tension in the C.C. and prevent it functioning normally.

Differences of personal temperament were also involved. Lenin's mind was coldly logical: he knew exactly the ends he pursued and the means that he had to adopt to attain them. At the congress he acted in accordance with a prearranged strategy, seeking to overcome the obstacles in his path by shrewd political manœuvres. His eyes were riveted on the pattern of voting, which he constantly analysed for clues as to possible shifts in the delegates' loyalties. Accustomed to thinking in terms of power, he took it for granted that the Party would continue to be dominated, as it had been in the past, by himself, aided by men who were in the last instance personally responsible to him. He did not see anything reprehensible in the idea of perpetuating his own authority. Half-consciously he had come to see himself as the living embodiment of orthodoxy—the keeper, as it were, of the Party's revolutionary conscience.

Martov, by contrast, was an emotional and warm-hearted man, less firm of purpose but with a strong sense of loyalty toward those with whom he worked. For the past two years he had identified himself whole-heartedly with *Iskra*; now he was preparing to submerge this allegiance in a wider loyalty to a Party built on *Iskra's* principles. He assumed that within this party no single individual, however greatly respected, would enjoy a position of paramountcy such as Lenin had been conceded by his fellow-editors. During the years of their collaboration Martov had fallen under the spell of Lenin's personality, scarcely realizing whither he was being led. On many occasions he had swallowed his misgivings, or acted against his better judgement, hoping in this way to serve the cause of unity. He had acted thus as recently as the first public debates on the draft statute. Now it was as though

the scales were suddenly lifted from his eyes. He was shocked into a sudden awareness of the fact that Lenin instinctively identified the Party with those who were prepared to do his bidding. His reaction took an explosive form that did credit to his fundamental intellectual honesty but at the same time revealed his political *naïveté*. In the statute commission meetings he proceeded to voice his objection to the whole ultra-centralist tenor of Lenin's draft, thereby repudiating ideas that he had hitherto accepted with scarcely a demur. This in turn shocked Lenin, who knew that their solidarity was essential if *Iskra's* will were to prevail. His nerves were already on edge. Such inconsistency by his old colleague was the final straw. Every instinct urged him to hold fast to his principles in the belief that, as on so many previous occasions, this would force Martov to change his mind. But this time he stood firm. Their dispute now had to be taken before a wider public.

On the morning of 15 August (N.S.) the expectant delegates were informed that on the first paragraph of the Party's constitution, which defined the duties of members, the statute commission had failed to produce an agreed formula. Two versions, one by Martov and the other by Lenin, were presented to the congress. The former proposed that membership should be extended to 'everyone who accepts the Party programme, supports the Party by material means and affords it regular personal assistance under the guidance of one of its organizations'. The latter restricted membership to 'everyone who accepts its programme and supports the Party by personal participation in one of the Party organizations'.¹ The difference between the two wordings seemed trivial, and a casual observer, unaware of what had passed behind the scenes, might well have wondered at the tempest it aroused.

Axelrod opened the debate by declaring that 'if we accept Lenin's formula we shall throw overboard some people who, although they cannot be accepted directly into an organization, are none the less members of the Party'. He illustrated his point, rather infelicitously, by deploring the possible exclusion of some professor who openly acknowledged his allegiance to Social Democracy. Martov came to his support: 'the wider we spread the title of Party member the better. We can but rejoice if every striker or demonstrator, when called to account for his actions, were able to declare himself a member of the Party. In my view a conspiratorial organization is acceptable only to the extent that it is encased within a broad Social-Democratic workers' party.' Lenin argued that his formula would stimulate the masses to form their own organizations. There was a need for a great variety of such bodies, ranging from clandestine groups with very restricted membership

¹ *Prot. II*, pp. 425, 262.

to what he called 'loose' organizations, which should combine large numbers with a minimum of formal obligations. Not all these bodies would necessarily belong to the Party: this was a matter for the Central Committee to decide in each case. Martov replied that his formula alone could guarantee that such 'loose' organizations would remain within the Party's sphere of influence: if Lenin's version were adopted, the Party would become simply an organization of professional revolutionaries.¹

The difference between the two men at this point was very narrow. Both of them conceived of the Party as embracing an *élite* distinct from the broad mass of the proletariat; moreover, they drew the line between the Party and the mass in approximately the same place. Martov had no sympathy with the Economist spokesman who called on Social Democracy to transform itself into 'a genuine workers' party', or pressed the claims of a democratic system whereby members should have the right to influence policy.² Like Lenin, he allowed for the existence of several categories of organization within the Party, each acknowledging a certain degree of control. The only point at issue was whether the adherents of these bodies should automatically be entitled to Party membership, or whether this should be a privilege conferred by the leaders as expedient. And even this was not a question of practical importance, since the statute made no provision for the registration of members, or for any real distinction between the rights and duties of members and non-members. (The obligation to pay dues was in existing circumstances a mere formality.) What then was the argument about? If one were to judge it at its face value, one would have to conclude that it centred upon differences in assessing the psychological effect of membership upon non-members. Seen in historical perspective, it could be said that Martov was half-unwittingly reacting against the organizational principles of Bolshevism, which were symbolized, as it were, in Lenin's membership formula. But in saying this one risks falling victim to the mystification deliberately engaged in by the contestants: for the debate was not really concerned with the question of membership at all. It was a reflection of the mutual distrust between Lenin and Martov, which now began to involve them in a frenetic struggle for power.

As the debate continued it acquired a momentum of its own, driving the leaders on either side ever further apart. Axelrod came back to the rostrum to affirm that Lenin's idea of membership 'directly contradicts the very essence . . . of a Social-Democratic proletarian party'; but he still hoped that compromise was possible.³ Plekhanov, who had been finding it hard to make up his mind, rather unexpectedly came out in

¹ *Prot. II*, pp. 265-6.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 267, 264.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

support of Lenin. The Party, he thought, could afford to dispense with 'professors of Egyptology' and other sympathizers who were not prepared to join an organization—although, as Akimov pointed out later, it was not so much professors, or other intellectuals, as ordinary workers who would be excluded from membership by Lenin's formula. For his part he espoused the cause of Martov, adding acidly that he hoped this would not compromise him in the eyes of Lenin and his followers.¹ Trotsky, too, backed Martov. Only a few days earlier he had called on the Party's central bodies to adopt the principle of 'organizational mistrust' in their relations with local committees; but now he decided that Lenin's formula would drive a wedge between workers and intellectuals.² The same point was put more forcibly by Zhor-daniya: if the Party followed Lenin's road, he warned, it would soon consist of 'generals without an army'.³

Tension was now rising dangerously. Lenin thought it wiser to accede to Axelrod's plea for compromise. 'I do not by any means consider our disagreement so vital, as if the life or death of the Party depended on it. We shall not perish from a bad clause in our statute!'⁴ But he put forward no proposals for a settlement, and the vigour with which he reiterated his views showed that he did consider the question of paramount importance. Martov's formula, he asserted, 'would undoubtedly open the door to all disorderly, vacillating and opportunist elements'. The Party had to distinguish between those who really worked and those who simply chattered: 'better for ten workers not to be Party members than for one chatterer to have the right to call himself a member'. Finally the question was put to the vote. Lenin's formula was rejected by 28 votes to 23.⁵

This defeat was almost the first that Lenin had experienced in his political career. His reaction was as abrupt and reckless as that of Martov a few days earlier. He at once decided 'to take revenge', as he later put it, by applying against Martov and his followers the ruthless pressure hitherto reserved for opponents of *Iskra*. In doing so he acted with an utter disregard for personal ties or affections that deeply shocked his former colleagues. He was undeterred by the fact that his defeat had been brought about by a free vote of the Party's elected representatives. It was sufficient that Martov's group had acted in concert with the declared opponents of *Iskra*. This made them renegades against whom

¹ Ibid., pp. 271-2, 278-9, 269. ² Ibid., p. 274. ³ Ibid., p. 278. ⁴ Ibid., p. 275.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 275-9. Martov's formula was accepted by 28 votes to 22, with one abstention. The dividing lines were not clearly drawn. Two delegates (with three votes) who later became Bolsheviks voted for Martov's formula; four incipient Mensheviks, including the southerner Levin, sided with Lenin. The five Bundists backed Martov, but the Economist trio, curiously enough, split at what should have been their moment of triumph.

all means were permissible. 'Once the first clause of the statute had been ruined, [he declared afterwards], we had to bind up the broken vessel with a double knot, as tightly as we could. . . . To carry out our work more successfully we had to remove the elements that were obstructing it and place them in a position where they could not harm the Party.'¹

Both men now assumed a pose of injured innocence and embarked on a furious struggle to mould the Party to their own advantage. Immediately after the debate on membership the *Iskra* caucus met, for the fourth and last time, to discuss nominations to the C.C.—the issue that had prompted the breach. Lenin insisted that at least two of the three members should be 'hard' (i.e. loyal to himself), while Martov would concede his adversary only one of the places to be filled. Martov suspected that if Lenin were to have a majority he would soon effect a *coup d'état*; Lenin feared that if Martov had a majority the C.C. would rebel against the authority of *Iskra*. To solve the deadlock it was proposed that the C.C. should have five members instead of three; but each of the rival leaders insisted that three of the five should be favourable to his own point of view, and the meeting broke up in confusion.² Lenin and his aides thereupon launched a feverish campaign to gain the delegates' support for their list, while Martov and his followers looked on in shocked dismay. It was during the course of this agitation that someone circulated a list of nominees, allegedly compiled by Martov, which contained the names of five 'softs', including the now discredited Alexandrova. The incident was later submitted to a court of inquiry: its findings were inconclusive, but showed a strong presumption that the person responsible had acted in bad faith.³ Whether this affair materially influenced the delegates seems doubtful: far more important was the fact that Lenin possessed a personal following, so that many waverers were prepared to see in him the embodiment of Iskrist principles. The upshot was that on 18 August (N.S.), within three days of the breach becoming public, Lenin could call a meeting of twenty delegates (with twenty-four votes), from which Martov and his followers were excluded. At this meeting it was agreed to nominate a C.C. in accordance with Lenin's wishes.

Meanwhile the struggle for advantage continued in the plenary sessions of the congress. The details need not detain us. Lenin first

¹ *Lenin*, vi. 97, 99.

² Lenin's list was: Krzhizhanovsky, V. A. Noskov, Lengnik ('hard'); Rozanov, Trotsky ('soft'). In Martov's list V. N. Krokhmal took the place of Lengnik. Lenin's list received eleven votes: Martov voted against it and there were four abstentions (*Lenin*, vi. 56, 223; Pavlovich, op. cit., p. 11.)

³ *Lenin*, vi. 225, 329–36; [Yu. O.] Martov, *Ob odnom 'nedostoyanom' postupke* (Geneva, 1904).

sought to ensure that the Party Council should be controlled by its *émigré* rather than its Russia-based element. He also endeavoured to give the C.O. the right to veto co-optations made by the C.C. to prevent the latter coming under 'opportunist' control. On both these questions he was defeated—although in the latter case only by the narrowest of margins.¹ He then made a final effort to save the day by demanding that decisions of the Council should be unanimous, but this, too, was rejected. There was now nothing to stop the C.C. from co-opting undesirable persons unless a surgical operation were performed upon the editorial board of *Iskra*. Lenin calculated that if Axelrod, Zasulich, and Potresov were expelled, Martov could be outvoted by Plekhanov and himself; therefore, so long as he remained on good terms with Plekhanov he could dominate the Council.² Possibly his reasoning was simpler: the debates had shown that, of his five fellow-editors, four were opposed to his policy, so that he could hardly expect them to concede him the leading role as they had done hitherto. Although he later denied that his sudden move against his old colleagues was motivated by a desire to preserve his own position, on occasion he virtually admitted that this was so. 'The clause of mutual co-optation was torpedoed. The error of Martov, supported by "the swamp", was revealed still more clearly. From this moment onwards the coalition became fully formed, and under the threat of defeat we had to load both barrels of our rifles.'³

But how could this bold stroke be carried out so long as he and his followers were in a minority? It almost seemed as though, when compiling the congress agenda, he had purposely provided for such an eventuality as this. For no sooner had the delegates disposed of the co-optation issue than they faced the problem of deciding which body, the League or the Foreign League, was to represent the Party abroad. The outcome of these deliberations was a foregone conclusion. Akimov and Martynov defended themselves to the last, but to no avail: a resolution was adopted which virtually declared their organization dissolved, and with protests at this 'insult' they left the hall. Shortly afterwards they were followed by the five delegates of the Bund, once the final *dénouement* was reached in the struggle over their position in the Party. The 'massacre of the innocents', as one eye-witness called it, was still not complete. There remained the *Yuzhnyy Rabochiy* group—a particularly delicate matter, because it could not be branded as 'opportunist' and its future had for some days been an apple of discord between Lenin and Martov. Martov made no move in support of the Economists

¹ *Prot. II*, pp. 298ff., 312.

² [L. D.] Trotsky, *II s'yezd RSDRP: otchet sibir'skoy delegatsii* (Geneva, 1903), p. 20.

³ *Lenin*, vi. 97.

or Bundists, but when the turn of the southerners came he could restrain himself no longer. Almost in hysterics, he proposed that the question be temporarily shelved. Lenin insisted on the group's immediate dissolution.¹ Martov now belatedly realized that his supporters were in a minority: for although the southerners remained in the hall, the departure of the Bundists and Economists was enough to tip the scales against him. Lenin and his group now had a precarious majority of two votes—it was sufficient for one delegate with two votes to change sides for it to disappear completely. It nevertheless permitted him to press on with his plans. It was from this majority (*bol'shinstvo*) that the Bolsheviks, as his followers came to be called,² took their name. From the standpoint of the power struggle Martov's rigidity was short-sighted in the extreme. It showed conclusively that he was not, as Lenin alleged, in an offensive league with the 'opportunists' against the 'hard' Iskristi, for had this been the case he would hardly have dispensed with his allies at the very moment when he stood most in need of their assistance.

The congress now had to elect the men that were to staff the Party's central institutions: three to the C.C. and three to the C.O. The Bolsheviks argued that the old editorial board had found it difficult to reach agreement and that most of the work had in practice been carried out by three of its six members: Lenin, Martov, and Plekhanov. This was true enough, but everyone now knew that much more was involved: it was not simply a matter of enabling *Iskra* to function efficiently, but of giving Lenin a decisive voice in the Party's affairs. Lenin claimed that the idea of electing twin triumvirates had originated with Martov, which the latter hotly denied.³ He announced that he would refuse to serve on an editorial board so composed: 'All power in the Party is in fact being handed over to two men, and I think too little of the status of editor to consent to join them as a third.'⁴ This was an impulsive gesture, typical of the man: had he paused to consider the matter coolly, he would have realized that on a board constituted as Lenin desired he would be likely to find himself in agreement on many issues with Plekhanov, and thus able to restrain Lenin's extremism. For much the same reasons the southerner Rozanov declined to serve on the C.C., and a 'hard' Iskrist, Lengnik, was appointed in his stead. Martov conceded the legality of the election, but contested the moral authority of a Central Committee elected on what was in effect a minority vote. The nomination of Plekhanov as chairman of the Party Council

¹ *Prot. II*, p. 353; cf. S. Gusev, in *PR* (1928), no. 77-78, p. 30.

² The terms 'Bolshevik' and 'Menshevik' did not come into general use until 1904, but will be used henceforth for the sake of convenience.

³ *Protokoly II-go ocherednogo s'yezda Zagranichnoy Ligi . . .*, pp. 53, 64-66; *Pis'ma*, p. 100; *Leninskiy sbornik*, vii. 291-5.

⁴ *Prot. II*, p. 375.

terminated the discussions on Party organization, and with this the work of the congress itself was virtually over. The delegates devoted their last days in London to reading the minutes of previous sessions, so that only a few hours remained for consideration of such important topics as the Party's attitude towards trade unions or the liberal opposition. They left for home deeply concerned at the unexpected turn events had taken: the nervous strain reduced at least one brave revolutionary to tears.¹ To many it must have seemed as though their work had been in vain. 'The schism', Trotsky wrote, 'came like a thunderbolt from a clear blue sky': the congress 'thought it was creating—it merely destroyed.'² The R.S.D.R.P. never recovered from the shock administered to it in August 1903. The second congress proved to be but the beginning of a fateful dichotomy which with remorseless logic spread downwards from the summit of its artificial edifice until the whole Party lay in ruins. The great schism naturally limited the Social Democrats' popular appeal. During the months that followed all attention was focused upon the internecine struggle between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

The principal significance of this rather unedifying conflict lies in the enduring imprint it left upon the psychology of Lenin and his followers. It was waged, as earlier factional struggles within the movement had been, with all the bitterness associated with *émigré* feuds. The contestants were driven to take up ever more extreme positions which rendered the possibility of a peaceful settlement increasingly remote. They felt impelled to justify their stand in ideological terms, thereby raising the dispute to a more lofty plane. Emissaries were sent to Russia to persuade the local committee-men to endorse one point of view or the other. In any normally constituted party one might have expected frustration at the outcome of the congress to produce a movement of protest against leaders so irresponsible. Muted echoes of such an attitude could indeed be heard, but they took no organized form.

Lenin had won a Pyrrhic victory. He had secured the dominant position in the Party which he sought, but only by arousing antagonisms so powerful as to render his control ineffective. Within a year he found himself in the wilderness.

The congress ended with Plekhanov and Lenin as joint editors of *Iskra*. They offered to invite the four ex-editors to return on the condition that they appointed Lenin as one of the C.C.'s two representatives on the Party Council. Martov thought the plan 'morally tainted'. He was, however, prepared to accept it if Lenin would also cede the opposition two places on the C.C.—a proposal which Lenin naturally

¹ A. Shotman, in *PR* (1928), no. 77-78, p. 63.

² [L. D.] Trotsky, p. 111.

refused to entertain.¹ The talks therefore broke down. In the middle of September the Menshevik leaders brought their chief supporters together in Geneva to consider the next move. Martov, Axelrod, and Trotsky were in a militant mood. They decided to form a 'literary group' and to wage an energetic campaign with the aim of changing the composition of the Party's central institutions. They declared that until their right to publish their own literature was recognized by the C.O. they would take no part in its work.² Since the Party statute, so comprehensive in other respects, did not define the right of a dissident minority to propagate its views, and since they lacked the means to put their plans into effect, this step was tactically unwise. It enabled Lenin to complain quite plausibly that their 'boycott', as he termed it, was a disloyal act detrimental to the Party's interests. It led him to stiffen his attitude to the idea of compromise. But it did succeed, as it was no doubt intended to do, in driving a wedge between him and Plekhanov. The latter insisted that further efforts be made to reach a negotiated settlement. At a meeting of all six members of the old editorial board early in October he proposed, with his colleague's reluctant consent, the co-optation of two Mensheviks to *Iskra*. This offer, too, was rejected by Martov and his friends as unsatisfactory. Lenin wrote to his lieutenants in Russia that 'there is no hope of peace, absolutely none. . . . War has been declared.'³ His tone was one of righteous indignation, but it seems he was not wholly displeased at the turn events had taken, which gave him the opportunity to 'expose' the opposition as 'anti-Party'. He made a final appeal to Martov, in the name of the central Party institutions, to take up his seat on *Iskra*, where he was promised freedom to state his case. The purpose of this move, denounced by Trotsky as 'bureaucratic Pharisaism', was to convince those unaware of the reasons why the earlier negotiations had broken down that the onus for the schism lay entirely with the Mensheviks.⁴

Attention now concentrated on a struggle for control over the Foreign League. This body had hitherto been politically dormant. Martov hoped that by summoning a congress of its forty-two members he could persuade them to enlist in his cause. The Central Committee anticipated that such a gathering of *émigré* intellectuals might well be dominated by the opposition and endeavoured to prevent it from being held. The Mensheviks succeeded in forestalling this manoeuvre and in the event found themselves with a slight majority over their

¹ [Yu. O.] Martov, *Bor'ba s 'osadnym polozheniem' v RSDRP* (Geneva, 1904), p. 6; *Leninskiy sbornik*, vi. 213; *Pis'ma*, p. 87.

² *Pis'ma*, pp. 94-96; *Leninskiy sbornik*, vi. 245-9.

³ *Leninskiy sbornik*, vi. 273.

⁴ *Pis'ma*, pp. 89-90; *Leninskiy sbornik*, vi. 300-13.

rivals. The congress was held in Geneva at the end of October. It could hardly fail to be a forum for the exchange of angry recriminations. Lenin and Martov each delivered a report on the proceedings at the Party congress, and ultimately a resolution was adopted censuring Lenin (who had been the Foreign League's representative there) for the line he had taken. It was also decided to amend the organization's own statute in such a way as to assure it greater autonomy *vis-à-vis* the C.C. This was an act of open defiance, since the latter body had already tabled a request that the Foreign League should accept a greater degree of centralized control. After a lengthy argument the Bolshevik delegates walked out, declaring that the decisions of the congress were illegal. It was the third time in five days that they had resorted to this strata-gem.¹

This did not in itself seem to mark a serious setback for Lenin, but it was soon evident that he had once again over-reached himself. He planned to carry out a *coup d'état* in the Foreign League whereby the Bolsheviks would be assured of a majority. The scheme was endorsed by the Party Council, at its first meeting on 1 November (N.S.), but was never carried out. For on the previous day Plekhanov, much disturbed, informed Lenin that he 'could not shoot at his own side' and that 'suicide would be preferable to a schism in the Party'.² To Lenin's dismay he proposed that, to conciliate the opposition, the old editorial board should be restored. He claimed that he was motivated solely by disinterested concern for Party unity. 'We had to choose between the lesser of two evils', he wrote later: he had hoped that the Mensheviks would be overwhelmed by such magnanimity and that the strife would quickly be terminated.³ But this was by no means the whole story. In point of fact Plekhanov had been growing steadily uneasy at Lenin's intransigent attitude. One incident in particular must have led him to question the wisdom of his present alignment. This was a revelation by Martov during the debates at the Foreign League congress that Lenin had been intriguing against his colleague: during the negotiations a few weeks earlier he had attempted to entice Martov to rejoin *Iskra* 'by persuading me that the two of us would be in complete agreement on most questions and would thus have a majority *vis-à-vis* Plekhanov'. On hearing this Plekhanov fell strangely silent.⁴ The *coup d'état* idea seems to have been the final straw. It gave Plekhanov the pretext he needed to dissociate himself from his tiresome colleague without appearing

¹ *Protokoly II-go ocherednogo s'yezda Zagranichnoy Ligi . . .*, p. 124; *Leninskiy sbornik*, vii. 120-86.

² *Leninskiy sbornik*, vii. 189.

³ G. V. Plekhanov, *Dnevnik s.-demokrata* (1911), no. 15, appx. 2, p. 6 (cited in *ibid.*, vii. 191-2).

⁴ *Protokoly II-go ocherednogo s'yezda Zagranichnoy Ligi . . .*, pp. 65, 68.

disloyal. His feeling afterwards was one of relief. In a private letter he compared Lenin to Robespierre and exulted in his fall.¹

Plekhanov's move seemed to take Lenin entirely by surprise. In a message designed for public consumption he wished him success in his efforts at conciliation, but to the Bolshevik C.C. he wrote indignantly of his 'treachery', which had caused 'a complete and terrible crisis': 'I shall go to any lengths', he added.² Plekhanov had offered to resign from *Iskra* in case the C.C. should fail to approve his plan. But Lenin now told him that, if one of them were to leave, he should prefer to do so himself. He therefore handed over his functions to Plekhanov and requested the C.C. to co-opt him to that body instead. This was a move he later had cause to regret. There was now no way for him to hinder Plekhanov, as sole editor, from inviting the Menshevik leaders back to assist him in his task. Later he admitted privately that he had been guilty of 'a careless step harmful to the Party'.³ In his public writings he advanced two arguments, not easily reconcilable, to explain his action. One was that he had thereby demonstrated goodwill towards Plekhanov's conciliation efforts. The other was that he was anxious to stiffen the resolution of the C.C. in the struggle that was now to be waged against the C.O.⁴ Plekhanov interpreted it as a move to place upon him all the onus for co-opting the former editors.⁵ Martov came nearer to the truth when he wrote that 'Lenin left because he did not want to admit his defeat [by Plekhanov's change of course] and was not strong enough to run the paper without Plekhanov's help and moral authority'.⁶ For if he had stayed on as sole editor, this would have convinced many that he was indeed, as the Mensheviks maintained, concerned solely with personal power; on the other hand, a *coup d'état* against Plekhanov and the new team could be carried out only with the aid of the C.C.—and for this it was essential for him to join that body.

Everything now depended upon the attitude of Krzhizhanovsky, one of the three C.C. members appointed at the second congress, who was now hastily summoned from Russia to give his verdict on the dispute. On 23 November (N.S.), shortly after his arrival, he held talks with Plekhanov and the opposition leaders. Plekhanov was pleased to find him sympathetic to his plans, but was somewhat disturbed to learn of the co-optation to the C.C. of four men whose names Krzhizhanovsky refused to divulge. Two days later he received from him an 'ultimatum' clearly inspired by Lenin. The terms proposed seemed

¹ *Pis'ma*, p. 97. ² *Leninskiy sbornik*, vii. 196–9, 208–9. ³ *Lenin*, xxviii. 364.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vi. 124ff., 294ff.; *Leninskiy sbornik*, vii. 193ff.

⁵ *Leninskiy sbornik*, vii. 196; [Yu. O.] Martov, *Bor'ba s 'osadnym polozheniem' v RSDRP*, pp. 81–83; *Plekhanov*, xiii. 401.

⁶ [Yu. O.] Martov, p. 45.

fairly reasonable, but Plekhanov resented the form in which they were presented; moreover, the document contained no indication of the measures that the C.C. would take if its demands were not complied with, and he had good reason to believe that in that event Lenin planned a *coup d'état* against *Iskra*. For he now learned that two more members had been co-opted: Lenin himself and another Bolshevik *émigré*, L. E. Galperin. These two men were designated representatives of the C.C. on the Council. It seemed clear that Lenin intended to call a meeting of the Council (on which there were now no representatives from the C.O.), at which Plekhanov would be outvoted and *Iskra* entrusted to Lenin's charge. Plekhanov therefore decided to co-opt the Mensheviks to *Iskra* on his own authority at once, without waiting for approval by the C.C.¹ Even after this blow Lenin still hoped to retrieve the situation, by dispensing with constitutional fictions altogether. He drafted an announcement to the effect that the C.C., unable to tolerate such an affront to the will of the Party, was taking *Iskra* into its own hands.² But Krzhizhanovsky agreed with Martov that this would be a 'criminally irresponsible' step and refused to endorse it. He could not help but see that it was Lenin who represented the chief obstacle to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. As a practical man he was anxious that this fruitless struggle among the *émigré* leaders should be ended as quickly as possible, so that the Party might devote its energies to more urgent tasks. On 29 November (N.S.) the Council met for the second time. Krzhizhanovsky attended on behalf of the C.C.; Lenin was not present. The main points in the agreement reached were: endorsement of the *Iskra* board as now constituted (i.e. all the former editors except Lenin, who was to be welcomed as a contributor); withdrawal of Lenin's nominee Galperin from the Council, thus eliminating the possibility of a *coup*; and sanctioning of the *status quo* in the Foreign League. Krzhizhanovsky also gave assurances privately that he would press his colleagues on the C.C. to co-opt two members of the opposition to that body, thereby making it representative of Party opinion.³

¹ *Leninskiy sbornik*, vii. 263. The biographical data in Lenin's *Sochineniya* give the date of his co-optation as 'prior to 25 November' (vi. 487). From a reference in *Leninskiy sbornik*, x. 39, it is clear that it took place between 23 and 25 November (N.S.). Evidence of Lenin's readiness to carry out a *coup* on these lines is provided by his letter to Lyadov of 10 November (N.S.) (*Soch.*, vi. 110), in which he envisaged the Party Council 'handing over *Iskra* to a commission' and summoning an emergency congress—the first mention of the idea that was to dominate his thinking for the next eighteen months. In his public writings, where he was at pains to present himself as a sincere advocate of Party unity, he concealed his actual design and played down the element of menace in the ultimatum of 25 November (N.S.): 'an ultimatum', he wrote, 'means precisely this: the "last word" about a possible peace' (vi. 297).

² *Leninskiy sbornik*, vii. 277.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 279; x. 241.

The Mensheviks now seemed to have made good the defeat they had suffered in the closing sessions of the second congress and to have achieved almost all the objectives they had set themselves in September. They were naturally in a jubilant mood. 'We were expecting the struggle to continue in the sharpest possible form . . . and suddenly victory is ours! Complete victory! Concessions by their side on all points.'¹ Krzhizhanovsky, too, could feel satisfied with the success of his mission: in a circular letter to the local committees he spoke grandiloquently of 'a new era in Party relations', in which everyone would work together amicably for the general good.² Peace seemed to have been restored.

Such assumptions failed to take into account Lenin's fanatical determination to exercise personal control over the Party's fortunes. A lesser man might have been reconciled to his defeat. But for Lenin the odds he faced were of no account: even if he stood alone he was convinced that his ideas were correct and his leadership essential for the Party's well-being. Not only did he refuse to accept the November settlement: he set out to undermine it, employing every subterfuge that came to his mind. For the next year he gave overall priority to a campaign to remove the Menshevik leaders from office. This he sought to achieve by calling a third Party congress, at which his supporters would be assured of a majority and could place him in a position of supreme authority. No other considerations were allowed to interfere with the pursuit of this objective. The editors of *Iskra* were made the target for a barrage of propaganda, in which they were portrayed as 'dis-organizers' and 'opportunists' who were leading the Party to perdition. He sought to use the Central Committee as a base for the prosecution of this private vendetta, and insisted that all his colleagues on that body should lend him their active support. 'There is only one salvation—a congress', he cried, ' . . . struggle for peace, for a halt to disorganization, for submission to the C.C.!'³ That 'peace' already existed he denied. It suited his purpose to misrepresent the situation, and to pretend that he was defending the *status quo* against an offensive launched by his opponents. The implication was that only he and his supporters were qualified to speak on the Party's behalf—or, to put it another way, that the Party's opinion was not necessarily identical with the sum of the opinions of its members, and that in some mystical way the leader could embody its 'general will'. He had acted before now on such an awesome assumption; but this was the first time that he expressed it so clearly. He ignored the formal limitations of Party discipline and shaped his conduct in accordance with a relative ethical standard. 'A rebellion is a fine thing when advanced elements revolt

¹ I. G. Smidovich to V. N. Rozanov, 29 November 1903 (Axelrod Archives).

² *Leninskiy sbornik*, x. 79.

³ *Ibid.*, xii. 45.

against those that are reactionary. When the revolutionary wing [of the Party] rebels against the opportunist wing, that is good. When the opportunist wing rebels against the revolutionary wing, that is bad.¹ While condemning his opponents for any action that in his view contravened the Party statute, he judged his own moves by the single test of expediency. He still hankered after the forms of legality—as, for example, in his insistence that nothing less than a *congress* be called to endorse his supremacy. He sought to utilize the trappings of the Party's constitution to conceal the reality of his own personal authority, which rested upon the loyalty of trusted followers and an ingenious system of indirect control.

This control system, too, had its roots in the practice of the *Iskra* period, but it was now that it was systematized: it was to be perfected only much later, in an incomparably broader historical context. It was essentially a technique of gaining and holding power by dividing men's loyalties. Within each organization to be controlled an 'unofficial' nucleus was formed of those linked by a common adherence to a particular goal or slogan—in this case the convocation of a new Party congress. The members of this nucleus maintained a strict discipline of their own and pursued a common policy towards those members of the larger organization who did not belong to their own group. Their immediate aim was to oblige the latter to profess support openly for their own objective. This could be done by straightforward persuasion (particularly effective where members of the larger organization were unaware that the nucleus existed); alternatively, measures of coercion might be employed. The nucleus could, for instance, usurp the functions of the larger organization and place the other members before a *fait accompli*: they could either submit, and concur in a re-orientation of its policy, or else leave the organization and allow themselves to be condemned by their ex-colleagues as dissidents. It was a system of manipulating opinion that left room for many refinements.²

For two months after the November settlement Lenin was still hopeful that he could bring about a new congress by a vote of the Party Council, since it seemed possible that Plekhanov would quarrel with Martov and change sides once again. For this reason, when the Council held its next meeting, at the end of January 1904, Lenin rejected proposals by Martov that they should proceed forthwith to settle their

¹ *Lenin*, vi. 321.

² For a stimulating modern study of Leninist organizational technique, see P. Selznick, *The organizational weapon* (N.Y.-L., 1952). One might perhaps at this point enter a caveat against attaching undue significance to the mechanics of this control system, the effectiveness of which clearly depends upon historical circumstances—not least the growth of an awareness among potential objects of control as to its implications.

differences along the lines suggested by Lenin himself two months earlier. Instead he put forward a propagandist motion designed to discredit the Mensheviks in the eyes of Party opinion. But Plekhanov came out in support of Martov's plan. Lenin also failed to carry a resolution calling for a new congress. Martov attacked the idea on three grounds: it would involve intolerable expense; there was no evidence that the rank and file desired such a gathering, or that they were properly informed about the issues involved; it could only deepen the schism, since many committees would refuse to acknowledge its decisions. Plekhanov added for good measure that the proposal could only be advanced by someone determined to obstruct any effort at compromise.¹

A competition now developed between Lenin and his opponents for the allegiance of the other members of the C.C. The Mensheviks were in a strong position: they controlled the Council, and they knew that Krzhizhanovsky was genuinely anxious to settle the dispute. So, too, were most of his colleagues: shortly after the January meeting five of the six members of the C.C. then in Russia expressed their disapproval of Lenin's demand for a new congress. They also rejected his suggestion that they should co-opt two more members, one of whom was to be the unpopular Krasikov. 'We know him too well', they remarked meaningfully. The motives behind the proposal were all too transparent. Their letter ended: 'We all implore the Old Man [Lenin] to give up his quarrel and begin work. We are waiting for leaflets, pamphlets and all kind of advice—the best way of soothing one's nerves and answering slander.'²

But this was a course Lenin had no wish to adopt. 'I am not a machine,' he replied, 'and cannot do any work in the present disgraceful state of affairs.'³ The struggle was to go on. Two C.C. members, Lengnik and M. M. Essen, were staying in Geneva and had fallen completely under his spell. He now sought to strengthen this nucleus by calling for others to be sent abroad as well. The C.C.'s statutory function was to 'direct and unite the practical work of the Party'. How was it to perform these duties if it were deprived of its personnel? Krzhizhanovsky suggested politely that Lenin should leave his Geneva sanctuary and tour the Russian committees to acquaint them with his views; but he met with a blank refusal.⁴ Sometimes he received letters of abuse. 'I am devilishly annoyed at [your] meekness and *naïveté*,' Lenin wrote to him at one point. 'It appears we have ceased to understand one another.'⁵ While he and his colleagues wrestled with their consciences, torn between personal loyalty to their leader and the dictates of reason,

¹ *Leninskiy sbornik*, x. 249–59.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 351–3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81. The editors do not reproduce Krzhizhanovsky's original proposal.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Lenin acted. He sent Lengnik and Essen to Russia to exert pressure on their colleagues, and at the same time set about forming an organization which could if necessary act as a rival Central Committee. This he called the 'Southern Bureau of the C.C.', although its leading figure, V. V. Vorovsky, was not a member of the C.C. and it had no official status. It was in fact a trio, composed of one representative from three local committees in the Ukraine (Odessa, Nikolayev, and Yekaterinoslav) that followed the Bolshevik line. In the north an even more shadowy organization, the 'Northern Regional Centre', came into existence.¹ Meanwhile Lenin devoted himself to the composition of a virulent polemic against the Mensheviks, published as *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: the Crisis in our Party*.² With this he hoped to rally the Party behind him as he had done with *What is to be Done?* But he reckoned without his colleagues on the Central Committee.

Towards the end of May one of them, V. A. Noskov, came to Geneva. Shocked by the tone of the pamphlet, he forbade its dispatch to Russia and forced Lenin to sign a written agreement that he would henceforth publish nothing in the name of the C.C. without its consent. He also insisted that he should either cease his agitation for a new congress or resign from the C.C.; if he did not do so, Noskov warned, his colleagues would. This ultimatum was backed by all but one of the C.C. members in Russia. Earlier Lenin had said that he would resign;³ but this, it seems, was just a phrase designed to frighten the others into accepting his line. Now he refused to resign, or to bow to the will of the majority; neither would he go to Russia for a plenary meeting of the C.C. nor accept a compromise on the terms put forward in January. He parried the threat by delaying his reply until he had consulted the members of the C.C. individually. He pinned his hopes especially on Krasin. But to his chagrin the latter replied in censorious tone, reminding him of his obligations as a member of the collective.⁴ Krzhizhanovsky felt that the situation was hopeless and resigned from the Central Committee.

Meanwhile the Mensheviks had been informed by Noskov of the situation and were seeking to isolate Lenin from his colleagues. Plekhanov wrote an article in *Iskra* entitled 'Silence is Now Impossible', in which he invited the C.C. to disown Lenin as a 'Bonapartist'.⁵ But it was not until July that the final breach came. At a meeting in Moscow the C.C. adopted a resolution containing no less than twenty-six

¹ Ibid., xv. 21, 16; *PR* (1928), no. 79, p. 65.

² *Lenin*, vi. 155-336.

³ V. D. Bonch-Bruевич, *Kak pechatalis' . . . zapreschennyye izdaniya nashey partii* (M., 1924), p. 110.

⁴ *Leninskiy sbornik*, xv. 91.

⁵ *Plekhanov*, xiii. 106-10.

clauses, some of which were kept secret. It began with a statement that the progressive disintegration of the Party was incompatible with its dignity and that it was essential for the C.C. to 'intervene energetically in the factional struggle'. It extended qualified approval to the line taken by *Iskra* and reaffirmed the C.C.'s opposition to the idea of another congress. Lenin was once again bidden to rejoin the C.O. and reminded of his duties. Noskov was appointed in his place as official foreign representative of the C.C.—about as far as it could go short of actual expulsion. Finally, it dissolved the Southern Bureau 'in view of the discrepancy between its present activities and those of the C.C.'¹ Three men were co-opted to the organization, all of them non-partisan figures of no great weight. The 'July declaration', as it is called in official Party histories, was the work of three men: Krasin, Galperin, and Noskov. Lenin was abroad; two members had resigned; two others had been arrested. Lenin contested the legality of the Moscow meeting on the grounds that one member, R. S. Zemlyachka, was not invited to attend, although qualified to do so. His opponents replied that she had forfeited her rights as a C.C. member by going to work in a local organization.² There was some merit in Lenin's argument, but by this juncture he was hardly in a position to lecture his colleagues on adherence to legality. In any case, even if he and Zemlyachka had been present, they would have been in a minority. This was perhaps the hardest blow of all, for it showed that his adversaries were beginning to understand his technique. It seemed as though his fortunes had sunk to their nadir.

The question now was: could the Menshevik leaders put their victory to good account and ensure proper direction of the Party's affairs? As it turned out, the disintegration in the Bolshevik camp was reflected in their own. In March a conflict broke out between Plekhanov and Martov which led the former to dissociate himself from *Iskra* for several months.³ More serious were the difficulties by which the Menshevik leaders found themselves beset as soon as they attempted to explain the schism in ideological terms, as they were bound to do if they were to carry conviction with men whose minds had been shaped in the Marxist mould.

The first step was to evolve a 'philosophy of organization' which they could set against that formulated by Lenin. This found expression in a claim that they stood for 'genuine' as opposed to 'bureaucratic'

¹ *Lenin*, vi. 407-9; for full text, see *Leninskiy sbornik*, xv. 124-6.

² *Leninskiy sbornik*, xv. 111, 122ff.; N. Shakhov, *Bor'ba za s'yezd* (Geneva, 1904), p. 94.

³ *Pis'ma*, pp. 101-4; *Perepiska*, pp. 198-200; A. N. Potresov and B. I. Nikolaevsky, *S.-demokraticeskoye dvizhenie v Rossii*, p. 117; V. Vaganyan, *G. V. Plekhanov . . .* (M., 1924), p. 431.

centralism. A great deal of energy was spent in searching for a magic prescription that would preserve the essence of democracy without its 'formalism'.¹ But the rather jejune notions that emerged satisfied no one. It was clear that, if any real advance were to be made, there had to be a critical re-assessment of the ideas with which *Iskra* had come to be associated during the pre-congress period—although such a venture inevitably raised most embarrassing questions.

The task of re-thinking the Party's creed was shouldered by Axelrod, whose article 'The Unification of Social Democracy and its Tasks' appeared to his fellow-Mensheviks 'like a flash of lightning in the gloom'.² He began by agreeing with Lenin's proposition that Russian Social Democracy had hitherto been dominated by an *élite* of intellectuals. But where Lenin sought to legitimize their position Axelrod wished to bring it to an end, to make the Party proletarian in fact instead of merely in name. He argued that, while it was true that the working class was exposed to bourgeois influence, this could take several forms. The radical intelligentsia was itself by social origin bourgeois, and thus the infection might be carried by them, unwittingly perhaps, to the masses through the medium of the Party itself. Worship of centralist methods of organization was typical of the 'bourgeois radical'; and the Bolsheviks, for all their ultra-left phraseology, were following in the Jacobin tradition. It was as though history were playing a trick upon the Party, 'clothing us in the garb of classical revolutionary Social Democracy in order to conceal from us the limited bourgeois nature of our movement'. He asked himself what the result would be if Lenin were to succeed in realizing his ideas. 'Those of us who are not afraid to call a spade a spade [he concluded] will be able to answer this question for themselves: in such an eventuality we would have a revolutionary political organization of the democratic bourgeoisie, dragging the Russian working masses in its wake as though it were leading an army into battle.' But the real task that faced the Party was to develop among workers used to slavish obedience a spirit of initiative and self-reliance (*samodeyatel'nost'*), a capacity to act in an independent and responsible manner. The objective which he had in mind was a Party led by working men who combined theoretical knowledge with practical experience, who could lead without becoming tyrants and obey without becoming automata.³

As the first critical analysis of Bolshevik thought, Axelrod's arguments are of considerable interest. The imputation to Lenin and his

¹ L. Cherevanin [F. A. Lipkin], *Organizatsionnyy vopros* (Geneva, 1904); M. Panin, in *Iskra*, no. 57 (15 January 1904), appx.

² F. Garvi, 'P. B. Aksel'rod i men'shevizm', *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* (1925), nos. 109-10, p. 11.

³ *Iskra*, nos. 55, 57 (15 December 1903, 15 January 1904).

followers of bourgeois tendencies was wide of the mark; here Axelrod's vision was limited by his Marxist conceptual framework. For the party that Lenin had in mind was one of a new type, in which the factor of class allegiance was relatively unimportant: an *élite* organization whose members were bound together by their commitment to a certain ideology and centre of power. Nevertheless many of his shafts struck home. Lenin was furious: his pamphlet *One Step Forward* . . . contained his reply. This was in effect a lengthy essay in self-justification, concerned for the most part with a sterile recapitulation of the manœuvres during and after the second congress. Even those inured to such things found Lenin's preoccupation with the minutiae of *émigré* politics excessive.¹

In the concluding chapters he sought to turn Axelrod's arguments back against their author. It was the 'opportunist' Mensheviks, he declared, who represented the alien intellectual element in the Party, while the Bolsheviks stood for its healthy proletarian core.

Nobody will dare deny that the intelligentsia . . . is characterized on the whole by individualism and an incapacity for discipline and organization. It is this, among other things, that distinguishes it from the working class; this is one explanation of the intellectuals' feebleness and instability, which the workers have so often had occasion to experience.

On the other hand, discipline and organization were assimilated especially easily by proletarians who had undergone factory training: 'Precisely the factory, which for some people is just a bugbear, is the highest form of capitalist co-operation, which has united and disciplined the proletariat and taught it to organize itself.'² In all countries Social-Democratic parties had their revolutionary and reformist wings, their Jacobins and Girondins; and the Mensheviks were simply the Russian variant of the international heresy of 'opportunism'. He was not afraid of the label of Jacobinism: 'A Jacobin who is inseparably linked to the organized class-conscious proletariat *is* a revolutionary Social Democrat. A Girondin who sighs for professors and school-children and fears the dictatorship of the proletariat and sighs over the absolute value of democratic demands *is* an opportunist.' He ended by calling on the workers to rally behind the Bolsheviks against all their enemies, from servants of the autocracy to Menshevik intellectuals inclusive.³

¹ One of Axelrod's correspondents dismissed Lenin's arguments as 'the cavils of an angry man' (S. Grintser to P. B. Axelrod, 14 July 1904, in Axelrod Archives); Axelrod's own comments, which he expressed in a letter to Potresov, were unfit for print (A. N. Potresov and B. I. Nikolaevsky, op. cit., p. 123).

² *Lenin*, vi. 309.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 303, 328. At this time Lenin lived in almost complete isolation, even from the little Bolshevik colony in Geneva. One of the few privileged to see him was N. Valentinov, who has given an interesting portrait of him at this

Characteristically, the charge in this tirade that most aroused the Mensheviks' ire was that of being 'reformists'. They could not afford to let the epithet stick, and at once took steps to prove their orthodox credentials by appealing to the fount of international Marxist wisdom. Axelrod obtained from Kautsky permission to publish in *Iskra* a letter by the German leader to the Bolshevik Lyadov, in which he explicitly stated that from personal acquaintance with the Menshevik leaders he found it difficult to credit them with opportunism. The dispute over Party organization, he maintained, had been artificially inflated: 'I do not see here any difference in principle between proletarian and intellectual tendencies, nor between "democracy" and "dictatorship"; it is simply a question of expediency.' He preached a sermon on the virtues of tolerance and the need to respect one's leaders.¹ The next shot was fired by Rosa Luxemburg, who was better informed than Kautsky about Russian affairs and could appreciate more readily the long-term implications of Lenin's ideas. She argued that 'opportunism' necessarily took a variety of guises, according to historical circumstance, and could not simply be identified with 'a constant attachment to a certain system of organization—to decentralization, let us say'. In Russian conditions there was a natural tendency to exaggerate the need for a highly-centralized well-disciplined clandestine party, led by a Central Committee whose writ ran 'from Geneva to Liège and from Tomsk to Irkutsk'. The Bolsheviks, she alleged, were following in the footsteps of Blanqui and Nechayev, who after all had also been intellectuals. Finally, it was wrong to see positive virtues in the discipline inculcated by industrial life and to imagine that workers could obey the orders of the Party just as they did those of their employers.²

The Menshevik leaders placed great hopes on the intervention of these authoritative international figures.³ This only showed that they failed to understand the sources of Lenin's strength. It was of course embarrassing for Lenin to face such unequivocal opposition from generally respected leaders. But this was not an insuperable obstacle. His followers could argue that Kautsky was unaware of the real situation in

critical turning-point in his career. As he worked on his manuscript, so his feelings of bitterness increased and the charges levelled at his adversaries grew more serious. Yet he shrank from pressing his arguments to their logical conclusion and demanding the exclusion of the Mensheviks from the Party—on this point, Valentinov points out, he himself took 'one step forwards, two steps back' (op. cit., pp. 175ff.).

¹ *Iskra*, no. 66 (15 May 1904); cf. D. Geyer, 'Die russische Parteispaltung im Urteil der deutschen Sozialdemokratie', *Internat. Rev. of Social History* (1958), iii. 195-219, 418-44.

² *Iskra*, no. 69 (10 July 1904).

³ Potresov spoke of Kautsky's letter as 'a bomb-shell' that would have 'a devastating effect' (A. N. Potresov and B. I. Nikolaevsky, pp. 120, 124).

Russia (which was true), and could go on to turn to their own account the instinctive feeling of resentment entertained by the rank and file at such overt intervention from abroad in an internal Russian dispute. It was characteristic that, where the Mensheviks naturally turned first for support to Europe, the Bolsheviks emphasized the resources of their homeland. One of Lenin's aides boasted that Russia already possessed a mature 'proletarian vanguard' capable of taking over leadership of the Party from the intellectuals.¹ When Axelrod gently reminded readers of *Iskra* that until recently most of them 'had still been buried in the deep sleep of history and had been in a completely uncultured condition', Lenin was quick to denounce this as a slander upon Russian workers, who had already given ample proof of their revolutionary zeal.²

The main source of Bolshevik strength was not national resentment but their opponents' loyal adherence to Marxist ways of thought, which prevented them from coming to grips with the problem before them. As economic determinists they could not present the schism as the work of one individual who claimed to know the interests of the Party and sought to use it as an instrument of revolution according to his own design. Even had they been fully persuaded of this themselves, it would not have convinced Party members accustomed to minimize the role of the individual, who naturally expected an explanation in ideological terms. Moreover, this would have obliged them to acknowledge that they themselves had been grievously at fault—since, when they had collaborated with Lenin on the editorial board of *Iskra*, they had publicly endorsed his view as impeccably orthodox. To have admitted such grave errors was not only psychologically difficult, it involved the risk of undermining their authority in the Party, which was based on the tacit assumption that the leaders, though not infallible, were at least insured against major errors by their superior theoretical wisdom. The rank and file were justified in asking what assurance they had that the present teaching of *Iskra* was any more correct than the old.

The dilemma they faced was put very frankly by Plekhanov. Criticizing Lenin for following the tradition of *Narodnaya Volya*, he went on: 'In saying all this, I feel that the reader is about to level at me a very serious reproach: ". . . if Lenin's views are so mistaken and harmful, if he is contradicting scientific socialism, why have you remained silent up to now?" ' He put forward several excuses: he had thought Lenin would see the light in time; he had not expected his ideas to have such a wide appeal; he had wished to avoid controversy in the Party. He concluded: 'it is true . . . that I went too far in whitewashing Lenin; this was . . . a mistake which I now greatly regret. I see now that it

¹ Ryadovoy [A. A. Bogdanov], in *Nashi nedorazumeniya* (Geneva, 1904), p. 53.

² *Iskra*, no. 57 (15 January 1904); *Lenin*, vi. 308.

would have been much better for the cause if I had already then [in 1902] exposed the theoretical mischief of his pamphlet *What is to be Done?* to a bright light.¹

This *cri de cœur* testified to Plekhanov's intellectual honesty, but it scarcely enhanced his reputation as a leader. One could not rebuild the Party wearing sackcloth and ashes. Nor were all the Mensheviks prepared to go to the lengths of Plekhanov or Axelrod in dissociating themselves from the traditions of 'old' *Iskra*.² They were now at the parting of the ways. Having decided to break with Lenin, they had to go on and affirm their determination to reconstruct the Party in accordance with democratic principles. They had to state in uncompromising fashion their objections to Lenin's moral relativism—for Martov's initial act of dissent had been largely prompted by moral considerations, and it was soon to become apparent that the difference between the two factions was as much ethical as political: some were prepared to compromise their principles in the interests of the Party, and others were not.

In the event they did none of these things. The practice of the Menshevik committees remained virtually indistinguishable from that of their opponents; and the defeat of Lenin in July 1904 was brought about by administrative measures rather than by an appeal to the Party's conscience. The Mensheviks made only tentative gestures in the direction of liberalization. They based their case upon the claim that they, not Lenin, had remained faithful to the real tradition of *Iskra*. This was bad tactics. It inhibited them from experiment, and enabled Lenin to expose any innovations they made as 'opportunists'. Instead of embarking boldly upon the cause of reform, they leaned over backwards in an endeavour to prove that they were more revolutionary than anyone else. There was thus an essential flaw in their position, the result of the fact that they had compromised themselves by their earlier conduct. The whole tenor of their thought was marked by an unimaginative dogmatism. It earned them a piquant rebuke from a sympathetic critic, Helphand (Parvus):

You are behaving in the manner of a shoal of orthodox carp, who think every little fish swimming in the ideological depths is a pike about to gobble you up. Take a look at the river when it is in spring flood. See how it brings down with it clods of earth and all manner of rubbish . . . how dozens of rivulets form on the surface of the ice-floes until they

¹ *Plekhanov*, xiii. 135–8.

² Martov, for instance, could write in November 1904 that *Iskra* had been 'the first to give the work of the Party a genuinely Social-Democratic character' (*Iskra*, no. 77 (6 November 1904), appx.), although elsewhere he repeated Axelrod's arguments almost word for word (*Vperyod ili nazad?*, appx. to *Iskra* no. 69 (1 July 1904), p. 24).

eventually break up—and yet there you sit on the bank with soup-spoons trying to scoop off the foam and cleanse the muddy torrent!¹

The Bolsheviks, by contrast, were readier to dive in boldly and let the current carry them where it would. This gave them a significant advantage in the contest between the two factions for the valuable prize of popular support. The unsophisticated masses now being drawn for the first time into political life responded most eagerly to those who spoke with assurance and who offered a programme of action that was simple, clear, and convincing. They were not concerned with doctrinal rectitude or moral probity. Although the Bolsheviks were weak in numbers, they drew strength from the determination of their leader. Lenin now had a much clearer conception of the form he wished the Party to take: this was the fruit of the schism, which increased his self-confidence. In 1904 he was more willing than he had been in 1902 to rely on his own judgement and to put his trust only in those who explicitly acknowledged his authority.

At first sight there appears to be a contradiction between the principles of *What is to be Done?* and the ideas expressed in *One Step Forward . . .*: in the former Lenin upholds the intellectuals as guardians of orthodoxy and regards the plain worker with distrust, lest he infect the Party with the germ of bourgeois ideology; in the latter this same worker is called upon to give a lesson in discipline to the intellectuals, who are now in turn suspected of bourgeois tendencies. But on closer examination the contradiction turns out to be illusory. If in 1902 Lenin declared that the intellectuals alone were capable of commanding, in 1904 he proclaimed that the workers alone were capable of obeying. In the meantime the intelligentsia as such had fallen from favour and its place was filled by Lenin himself and his entourage. The Bolsheviks had taken a great stride forward in the direction of authoritarianism. Perplexed and hesitant, the Mensheviks followed them; but the road ahead led to a realm where they were temperamentally out of place. In a Russia gripped by revolution fortune was likely to smile upon their rivals.

¹ A. N. Potresov and B. I. Nikolaevsky, p. 139.

V

THE PARTY TAKES THE OFFENSIVE

ON the night of 26-7/January 1904 Japanese torpedo-boats launched a surprise attack upon the Russian Far Eastern fleet at Port Arthur, disabling no less than seven capital ships. Russia suddenly found herself engaged in a war for which she was in no way prepared—militarily, politically, or psychologically. The circumstances of the attack aroused patriotic opinion, and the authorities did their best to present the war as one fought to defend the country's vital interests. But it was common knowledge that the outbreak of hostilities was due in large measure to the Russian Government's own blundering forward policy in Manchuria and Korea—distant and alien lands for which few Russian citizens felt any concern.] The Tsar himself, with his visions of imperial grandeur, bore a good deal of the responsibility for the turn events had taken. He had deliberately placed his trust in a small clique of courtiers, soldiers, and business men, some of whom had private interests in the Far East, and disregarded the advice of his wiser and more cautious ministers. It was for his opposition to the increasingly militaristic tenor of Russian policy that Witte was dismissed in August 1903. From then onwards the most powerful man in the country was the unpopular Minister of the Interior, Plehve. / It was widely believed that the war had been wilfully engineered by Plehve in order to deflect attention from internal problems and obstruct the movement for reform. This was untrue; but the fact that such views could be seriously entertained showed the extent to which the Government had cut itself off from public opinion. The breach rapidly widened as reports came in from the theatre of operations. They told a melancholy tale of humiliating reverses and inconclusive engagements, often resulting in heavy casualties.] More than twenty-five years had elapsed since Russia had last been at war, and contemporaries were unprepared for a struggle waged with the first refinements of twentieth-century military technology. In eighteen months of fighting / Russia lost over 200,000 men in killed and wounded. / The natural reaction was to look for scapegoats. There was no lack of suitable candidates, military and civilian. The armed forces suffered from their traditional shortcomings: incompetent leadership, brutal treatment of subordinates, and an excessive concern for the formalities of discipline while major abuses were allowed to go unchecked. There was widespread corruption. In the circumstances / many people were

inclined to condemn all authorities indiscriminately, to blame 'the system'. Resentment focused on the Government. It was charged with a variety of faults, not all of which could justly be laid at its door. 'Tsarism' was identified with backwardness, oppression, and everything in their country of which Russians felt ashamed. In many quarters demands began to be voiced for radical reform: for constitutional and representative government, for political and civil liberties, for extensive social and economic change—and above all for a speedy end to the war, purchased if necessary by acknowledging defeat. Within a matter of months the domestic situation underwent a complete transformation. The Russian body politic, normally so torpid and quiescent, was stirred into unwonted turbulence. As tempers grew more inflamed and expectations rose breaches of public order became increasingly frequent, until every day brought news of industrial unrest, attacks on the police, street demonstrations, or meetings of protest. It seemed as though the country were in the grip of some strange political epidemic. The popular name for it was 'revolution'. Its onset took by surprise even those who for generations had been debating the means of bringing it about.

'The Russian revolution of 1905' is a term too well-established and convenient to be discarded. But a purist would be justified in arguing that there was no such thing: no major change took place in social relationships, and the autocracy emerged from the fray with most of its power intact. In essence what occurred was a spontaneous and chaotic popular upheaval, with many anarchic features, in which the various social and national groups involved pursued disparate, and often conflicting, objectives. The leaders were by and large men thrust up suddenly from below. The influence of organized political parties did not reach far beyond the educated *élite*. Politicians with widely differing points of view sought to gain control of the situation, but practical experience often administered a sharp rebuff to their preconceived ideas. The mass of the population tended to respond in an unpredictable manner to all appeals and instructions from above—those designed to provoke them to action as well as those calculated to encourage restraint. It has to be remembered that the country's system of communications was very inadequate. News reports in the press were usually distorted, and for most people rumour was the principal source of information. Those who were illiterate were prone to place their own construction on what they heard.

Harassed local officials resorted to a variety of expedients in their effort to preserve some sort of ordered administration. They were used to receiving detailed guidance from their superiors, and when faced with a totally unfamiliar situation they often lost their heads. At the

summit of the bureaucratic hierarchy equal confusion reigned. The general reaction was to pretend that everything was well under control, even where this was far from the truth. Most ministers underestimated the seriousness of the revolutionary threat; few had any constructive ideas for meeting the challenge it posed. Nicholas II was irresolution personified. He viewed the popular upheaval in a spirit of blank incomprehension, mingled with fear and distaste. His sentimental insistence on preserving the forms of autocracy prevented his more realistic advisers from coming to grips with the problems that faced them, and the Government's actions were thus hesitant and contradictory. It had no real policy to meet the crisis, for it refused to acknowledge that a crisis existed.

It was characteristic of the situation in 1905 that even many conservatives should turn a deaf ear to the Government's calls for support. They were shocked at the scope of the disturbances and contemptuous of the authorities for their failure to provide a clear lead. Most of them lapsed into a mood of despondency, devoting themselves to the care of their private interests. A few zealots set about forming patriotic or monarchist organizations, but these tended to do their cause more harm than good. They generally came under the control of irresponsible extremists whose only weapon against their real or supposed enemies was physical violence. The so-called 'black hundreds' were bands of ruffians and delinquents, recruited from the dim lower fringe of urban society, who attacked strikers, intellectuals, or members of other nationalities. Their activities culminated in anti-Semitic *pogroms* in some cities that cost hundreds of lives. At the time it was widely believed that the 'black hundreds' were directed by some secret central nucleus. This, however, was a myth: although they obtained some covert support from sympathizers in official positions, there was nothing in the nature of a national right-wing organization until the very end of 1905, and even then it was none too effective. The significance of the 'black hundreds' was twofold: they increased the difficulties of those who genuinely sought to uphold law and order, and they encouraged the use of violence, on a much more extensive scale, by revolutionary elements.

In the opposition camp the initiative at first lay with the moderates, but they found themselves subjected to increasingly heavy pressure from the left. Considering the socialist traditions of the Russian intelligentsia, the vigour of the liberals during 1904 and the first nine months of 1905 seems rather surprising. Their success was such that many of them succumbed to illusions about the extent and source of their strength. They saw themselves as the accredited spokesmen of the nation as a whole. Yet their links with the broad mass of the population were not at all substantial. They owed their prominence partly to

the chaos that prevailed among the various socialist groups. [The weakening of established authority left a political vacuum which no one else was strong enough to fill.]

The situation was a good deal less straightforward than it seemed at the time. Most contemporary intellectuals assumed that the struggle was one between the Government, supported only by a few reactionary elements in the privileged classes, and the rest of Russian 'society', led by respectable liberals and united in its demands for democratic reform. In point of fact [the opposition comprised a loose congeries of small groups, some more radical than others, all struggling simultaneously against each other as well as against the Government, and at the same time appealing for support to the politically uncommitted masses. The advantages naturally lay with the extremes: on one hand the conservatives, who could mobilize the latent forces of national sentiment and respect for the rights of property; and on the other hand the socialists, who were more ruthless in exploiting popular discontents and could appeal to widespread aspirations for a more egalitarian social order. In a society where the educated *élite* was so far removed from the largely inarticulate mass, liberal groups could not compete effectively. While they joined in the call for radical social and economic reforms, their main concern was with the winning of representative institutions.] They saw constitutional government as essential in order to protect the gains secured by popular pressure. [The workers and peasants might echo their demands, but all too frequently they did so without a clear understanding of what they implied: in their eyes social questions were all-important, and constitutional government was simply a stepping-stone to the goal of egalitarian revolution. The fact that the opposition movement shared a common platform gave it a deceptive air of cohesion. In reality it was rent by a tragic disunity that was ultimately to cause its defeat.]

Almost exactly six months after war broke out Plehve was assassinated. The *coup*, organized by the S.R.s, provided them with powerful evidence to support their argument that individual terror was a highly effective political weapon. Plehve's elimination made a deep impression upon everyone, including the conservatives. His post was the key appointment in the administration, which enabled its holder to determine the tenor of domestic policy. Nicholas hesitated for some weeks before filling the vacancy, and ultimately decided to embark upon a new course. The political barometer changed from 'freeze' to 'thaw'. The new minister, P. D. Svyatopolk-Mirsky, was a man of principle, kindly and well-intentioned but lacking in experience. Soon after his appointment he hinted at his intention to pursue 'a sincere, loyal, and confident

attitude towards public . . . organizations, and the population in general', with the object of restoring the mutual trust so necessary for the well-being of the State.¹ As an earnest of goodwill a number of obstructive edicts were countermanded and the censorship regulations relaxed. The press at once struck an optimistic note, and the *zemstvo* leaders proceeded to formulate ambitious plans. They resolved to call a congress to discuss, among other matters, the question of constitutional reform. Mirsky had misgivings about the proposal, but was manœuvred into a position where he had no alternative but to seek the Tsar's approval for the congress to be held. It was supposed to be a private gathering, but in fact was accorded widespread publicity. On 9 November 1904 those present adopted resolutions demanding an amnesty for political offenders, civil freedoms, and a representative assembly, which most of them wished to see endowed with legislative powers.

This was a remarkable triumph for the Liberation League, which had succeeded in setting the tone for the *zemstvo* movement as a whole. Nicholas was confronted with a public challenge to his authority as autocrat. The demands put forward at the congress were endorsed at meetings of the various local *zemstva* and at a number of banquets organized by professional associations, student corporations, and similar bodies. These meetings gave the Russian educated public an opportunity for political discussion such as it had never enjoyed before. Mirsky evidently thought it advisable to provide a safety-valve through which people could ventilate their grievances. The customary procedure at such gatherings was for the gendarmes in attendance to close them down, and arrest the participants, as soon as they ventured to utter public criticism of the Government. Mirsky now instructed the police to exercise discretion, and they were obliged to sit in embarrassed silence while speakers exposed them to ridicule.

At the same time Mirsky endeavoured to persuade the Tsar to meet the opposition's demands, at least in part, by constitutional concessions. Nicholas at first consented, but then reversed his decision. On 12 December the Government replied to the *zemstvo* congress with the promise of reform on a number of contentious issues, but said nothing about the key question on which all else depended. Its measures therefore failed to make a positive impact. Ten days later Port Arthur fell to the Japanese, and the year came to a close in an atmosphere of tension and uncertainty.

At this juncture the authorities in St. Petersburg perpetrated what

¹ Cited by B. B. Veselovsky, *Istoriya zemstva za sorok let* (Spb., 1909-11), iii. 594. On Mirsky, see Witte, *Vospominaniya* (M., 1960), ii. 321-6; D. N. Shipov, *Vospominaniya i dumy* (M., 1918), pp. 236ff.; Lyubimov MSS. in Russian Archive, New York.

can only be considered as an act of indescribable folly. On 9 January 1905 large crowds of workers, some of whom were accompanied by their womenfolk, set out from various parts of the city for the Winter Palace. They intended to present a petition of grievances to the Tsar. Before they could reach their destination they were fired on without warning by troops. Over one hundred people were killed and several hundred wounded.

There was no justification for the shooting, since the demonstrators, although excited and indignant, were not in an aggressive mood. They were unarmed, and some of them even carried icons and patriotic banners. Most of them still regarded themselves as loyal subjects of the Tsar, whom they expected at least to receive their petition, if not to grant all their requests. No prior indication had been given that they would be met by force. The shooting thus had all the ingredients of pure tragedy. It testified to the fantastic confusion and inefficiency that prevailed in the 'ruling spheres', where senior ministers were unable to distinguish friend from foe. It was a graphic indictment of the autocratic order which played into the hands of those determined to bring about its overthrow. 'Bloody Sunday', as it came to be known, had a profound effect upon the political orientation of tens of thousands of Russian workers. It dissipated what remained of peasant ways of thinking and opened their minds to revolutionary propaganda. This development is so important for an understanding of the role played by the Social Democrats in 1905 that it will be expedient to examine it more closely here.¹

The temper of the St. Petersburg workers prior to 9 January 1905 may be judged from the astonishing success obtained by Georgiy Gapon, an Orthodox priest whose organization, the 'Assembly of Russian Factory Workers', sponsored the procession. This body had been established, with the sanction of the authorities, early in 1904. Gapon maintained regular contact with the police, but his Assembly was far from being a simple copy of the organizations set up by Zubatov. The two leaders were themselves cast in a very different mould. Zubatov was first and foremost a servant of the autocracy. 'Father Georgiy' (as he was known to his followers) seems to have had no clearly defined political convictions. He was an idealist who—somewhat

¹ For the events of 9 January, see L. Gurevich, 'Narodnoye dvizhenie v Peterburge 9-go yanvarya 1905 g.', in *Byloye* (1906), no. 1, pp. 195-223, and the inquiry by a group of independent jurists reprinted in *Revolyutsiya 1905-7 gg. v Rossii: dokumenty i materialy*, ed. A. M. Pankratova and others [hereafter cited as *DiM*] (M., 1955-), i. 105-24. On the casualty figures, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 53, 63, 103, and V. I. Nevsky, 'Yanvar'skiye dni v Peterburge v 1905 g.', *Krasnaya letopis'* (1922), no. 1, p. 55. Cf. also *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1925), no. 11, pp. 1-25, 444-8.

vainly, perhaps—saw it as his personal vocation to improve the moral and material situation of the downtrodden masses. His evident sincerity soon earned him the respect and affection of thousands, until his popularity assumed the proportions of a veritable cult. Gapon was an excellent orator, who spoke in language his listeners readily understood. The secret of his success lay in his ability to give coherent expression to the emotions of those who themselves, owing to their lack of education, were scarcely articulate. He did not seek to impose his will upon his followers, but let himself be swayed by their passing moods. At the same time Gapon was an ambitious man, with a native cunning that enabled him to deceive his official sponsors as to his real opinions. Many responsible people were impressed by his clerical garb and believed that his organization was directed wholly to beneficent ends compatible with Government policy. In this way Gapon and his colleagues were able to evade the limitations which the statute of their organization placed upon its activities. These were at first mainly of a cultural or educational nature. But by the autumn of 1904 it had become well-nigh impossible to avoid the discussion of political issues. The mere fact that meetings of the Assembly could be held openly stimulated interest in its affairs—particularly among women workers and those more advanced in years, who had hitherto stood aside from politics—and by November 1904 it had eleven branches, located in various parts of the city, with a total enrolment of some 8,000.¹

Within the leadership of the Assembly there had existed from the start a group of men and women who considered themselves socialists, although they were not members of any clandestine organization. They collaborated willingly enough with Gapon, but at the same time sought to counteract any possible backsliding on his part by asserting their own influence within the Assembly. Gapon was never simply a figure-head, but there were moments when his personal control over his followers was less than complete. As the atmosphere in the city grew tenser, the left-wing elements in the organization became more vocal. This does not appear to have attracted the notice of the authorities. The rapid growth of the Assembly, it is true, did arouse some concern, but the police thought it wiser to avoid precipitate action. The employers were less liberal. Some of them saw the Assembly as a serious challenge. Towards the end of December a foreman at the Putilov metallurgical works ordered the dismissal of three men who belonged

¹ On Gapon and the Assembly, see I. Pavlov, in *Minuvshiye gody* (1908), no. 3, pp. 22–58, no. 4, pp. 79–107; S. I. Somov (Peskin), in *Byloye* (1907), no. 4, pp. 30–43; *Minuvshiye gody* (1908), no. 7, pp. 39–44; N. M. Varnashev, in *Istoriko-revolutsionnyy sbornik*, ed. V. I. Nevsky (M.-Lg., 1924), i. 177–208; S. Aynzaft, *Zubatovshchina i Gaponovshchina* (M., 1925). Text of the petition in *DiM*, i. 28–31.

to the local branch of the organization. Its leaders took the line that this was a deliberate attempt to undermine its authority. Protests made in various quarters failed to bring satisfaction, and on 3 January all men employed in the Putilov works withdrew their labour. Events then moved at whirlwind speed. With each day that passed the strike spread and the demands put forward became more comprehensive. By 7 January virtually all the larger enterprises in the city were affected. At the Assembly's branch office large crowds gathered to discuss the situation, and there was a good deal of inflammatory speech-making. The idea of presenting a petition to the Tsar had an immediate success. There were some, influenced by socialist propaganda, who thought it reactionary; but they were in a minority. Most of Gapon's followers found their feelings adequately reflected in the opening words of the petition: 'We, workers of St. Petersburg, have come to Thee, Sovereign, to seek justice and protection; we are destitute, oppressed, overburdened with heavy toil, cursed at, not treated as human beings but as slaves . . .' The note struck was one of bewildered indignation and naïve trustfulness: 'Do not refuse to aid Thy people.' The concrete demands listed, it is true, were radical enough: a constituent assembly, conclusion of peace, an eight-hour day, and freedom to strike and form trade unions. But these were the work of intellectuals (not all of them members of the Assembly), which were then presented to mass meetings for endorsement. It may be doubted whether more than a fraction of those who marched to the Palace appreciated their implications. Most of them took little thought of the possible consequences and were simply swept along by the prevailing mood of enthusiasm and hysteria.

The spirit of the crowds could scarcely have been further removed from that of a 'class-conscious proletariat' in the Marxist sense. The modest role played by the Social Democrats in these tumultuous events later caused them some embarrassment. It was clear beyond all doubt that even the employees of large industrial concerns in the capital, where clandestine organizations had existed for a decade or more, felt no deep attachment to the R.S.D.R.P. The mass of workers still had no firm political ties, and were ready to follow almost anyone who held out the promise of social betterment. Gapon's Assembly had one inestimable advantage denied to a clandestine political party: it gave men an opportunity for lawful organization in defence of their interests. The scope permitted for such activities might be pitifully inadequate; but it was better than nothing. Among the first to rally to Gapon were men who had broken with the Social Democrats because it seemed hopeless to try to build up viable labour organizations by illegal means. Even 'police unionism', they reasoned, had its merits, in that it served to

mobilize those who would take no part in revolutionary work, and so could build a bridge between the Party and the 'broad masses'.¹ Such arguments, though based on practical experience, carried no weight with orthodox Marxists. They dismissed Gapon out of hand as a Zubatovite agent, and in their propaganda depicted his organization as an instrument of the class enemy. Underlying this negative approach was the unexpressed fear that his Assembly might prove more successful than the Party in winning the workers' confidence, at least in the short term. Such alarm was of course not entirely unfounded. But it led to serious errors of judgement, not only by the *émigré* leaders, but also by the local Party chiefs in St. Petersburg. Towards the end of December Lenin advised S. I. Gusev, secretary of the St. Petersburg committee, of the existence of 'a Zubatovite organization' in the capital (apparently assuming that otherwise he might overlook its existence), and added: 'I strongly recommend *extreme* caution in your relations with this association in view of the *enormous* risk of provocation. This association has now moved slightly to the left, but it is wholly in the service of the bourgeoisie and the police.' Gusev replied in the same tone: 'This Father Gapon is most undoubtedly a Zubatovite of the highest order,' who was endeavouring to discredit the Party; unfortunately, he reported, some 'conscious' workers had fallen prey to his wiles.²

Already in the first days of January Social-Democratic agitators attended meetings convoked by Gapon's followers, but on at least one occasion they were escorted from the hall as soon as they attempted to distribute their leaflets.³ As the strike spread the Party's popularity grew. Even so its spokesmen only obtained a sympathetic hearing so long as they confined themselves to criticism of existing social conditions; once they began to call 'Down with the Autocracy!' and to unfurl their scarlet banners there were jeers and catcalls.⁴ Gapon personally endeavoured to prevent the movement losing its non-violent and non-party character. 'Do not introduce discord,' he appealed to one Social-Democratic orator: 'let us march towards our sacred goal under a single peaceful banner, common to one and all.'⁵ Somewhat more successful were those Social Democrats (apparently Mensheviks, or at least sympathetic to them) who, in one or more private meetings with Gapon and his associates, persuaded him to incorporate into the text of the petition demands drawn from the Party programme. It was these insertions that gave the document its curiously hybrid character. But the significance of this need not be unduly exaggerated,

¹ I. Pavlov, p. 27.

² *PR* (1925), no. 38, pp. 20-21; no. 37, p. 24.

³ V. I. Nevsky, p. 34.

⁴ D. Sverchkov, *Na zare revolyutsii* (Lg., 1925), p. 82.

⁵ L. Gurevich, p. 205.

since the petition was constantly being amended under pressure from the crowds; the final drafting appears to have been the work of a mixed committee.¹ In general the Social Democrats exercised little influence. The most that can be said is that Party agitators, acting to a large extent on their own initiative, did their share in heating the atmosphere in the streets prior to 9 January. The St. Petersburg committee spent much of its time between 8 and 10 January in laborious and inconclusive negotiations with the C.C. and the local Mensheviks over internal Party affairs.² It could not decide what line to take about the march. As one eye-witness put it later, 'after a long discussion we came to the conclusion that our plan of action would be determined by the future course of events'.³ One Party member was killed, and one injured in the shooting. The low figure may be partly explained by an agreement concluded earlier with Gapon, whereby the Social Democrats undertook to march in the rear of the procession. The object of this was to prevent them from taking charge of it and exploiting it for their own purposes. Since Gapon was the master of the hour, they had no alternative but to accept his terms if they wished to avoid total isolation. Livshits writes: 'We Party workers knew very well that the forthcoming peaceful procession would not lead to anything worth while and would involve the masses in bloodshed. But where was the force that could have forestalled this terrible misdeed, for which tsarism and clericalism were responsible? Such a force did not exist. We were all hypnotized, and surrendered to the monstrous dark force of spontaneity.'⁴ Unable to provide leadership, the self-styled vanguard was glad to accept a place far in the rear of events. Nevertheless, the Party's future prospects were not discouraging. The shots on the Palace Square gave the Social Democrats, as we shall see, their first real opportunity to extend their influence over workers in the capital and in many other cities as well.

[According to official statistics a total of 414,000 men struck work in January 1905. In the following month the figure was 291,000 and in March 72,000.⁵ A wave of labour disturbances seemed to ripple outwards from the capital.] In St. Petersburg itself Gapon's Assembly was hastily suppressed, but it was several days before a semblance of

¹ I. Pavlov, pp. 91-92nn. These meetings are variously dated to 5, 6, and 7 January. The first signatures to the petition were affixed on 7 January. There appears to be no justification for the assertion of the conservative writer P. Almazov (*Nasha revolyutsiya* (Kiev, 1908), p. 252) that the Social-Democratic amendments were added after the signatures had been collected, and that the petition was therefore fraudulent.

² *PR* (1925), no. 37, p. 39.

³ V. Livshits, in *PR* (1924), no. 25, p. 279.

⁴ Loc. cit.

⁵ V. Varzar, *Statistika stachek rabochikh . . . za 1905 g.* (Spb., 1908), p. 6; cf. A. S. Amalrik, in *Istoricheskiye zapiski* (1955), no. 52, pp. 142-85.

normality was restored. In Moscow a number of factories ceased production on the 10th, and by the 14th 30,000 men were out on strike. Work was also suspended, wholly or in part, in Yaroslavl, Saratov, and several other towns in the central and Volga provinces. (The most important development was the near-total stoppage on the railways, which lasted for a week. When further trouble occurred early in February martial law was declared. Wisely, the authorities enforced this measure with moderation and accompanied it with concessions: a 'provisional' reduction of the working day to nine hours, a wage rise for some unskilled grades, and improvements in labour relations. This encouraged workers, in industry as well as in transport, to concentrate mainly on 'economic' demands. Managements were often inclined to compromise in order to ensure continued production, especially where they were working for the war effort. This helps to explain why the strikes that took place did not as a rule last long, but broke out at frequent intervals in the same enterprise.) Where the grievances of one group received satisfaction men in the same enterprise or in others nearby were quick to present similar demands themselves. Particularly common was the call for an eight-hour working day.

(In ethnically Russian territory this movement was by and large spontaneous and non-violent. There was little in the way of concerted action, although here and there informal committees sprang up on a factory or workshop basis to press the men's case. The situation was very different in the border territories, where (whatever the theorists might say) national consciousness provided a potent stimulus to revolt. Here the labour movement had a much more clearly-marked political flavour, and strikes were frequently organized by local revolutionary groups. Throughout the western and north-western provinces, and also in Transcaucasia, violence was endemic. On 13 January troops in Riga opened fire upon menacing crowds streaming towards the centre of the city: some 70 to 80 persons are known to have been killed and more than 200 injured.¹ Disorders also occurred at other Baltic ports. In Warsaw and Łódź terrorists raided armourers' shops and attacked public buildings, as well as individual Russian soldiers, policemen, and officials. The authorities reacted by arresting large numbers of suspects. In most towns there were strikes and protest marches in which white-collar elements often joined. In Transcaucasia the response to the events of 9 January was immediate: a general strike broke out in Tiflis which quickly spread to several other centres. The railwaymen, who here as elsewhere acted as the spearhead of the movement, sometimes perpetrated acts of sabotage. It was not uncommon

¹ *DiM*, i. 316ff.; *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1925), no. 11-12, p. 268; Ohsol MSS. in Russian Archive, New York.

for unpopular Russian foremen and others to be killed by their Georgian fellow-workers,¹ although normally the pattern was one of collaboration. At Baku the workers in the oilfields had just won substantial concessions after a particularly bitter strike, and were not in a mood to suffer further deprivations. But the provincial governor was assassinated, and shortly afterwards the latent tensions in the city flared up in an attack by Muslim Tartars on Armenian residents. There were heavy casualties. It was widely believed that the riot had been deliberately instigated by the authorities. Batum was to all intents and purposes controlled by a workers' committee, and in the factories production was suspended for weeks on end. In Guria, where the peasant movement followed a dynamic all its own, the Government had long since lost command of the situation. By the beginning of 1905 the disorders had spread to Mingrelia, Imeretia, and other parts of Georgia. Taxes and dues remained unpaid and the economic life of the area virtually came to a standstill. A rudimentary kind of administration was carried on by village elders and assemblies. They were supervised by a network of local revolutionary committees, which in name at least were Social-Democratic. In some cases the peasants revoked their oaths of allegiance to the Tsar and swore loyalty to their new leaders, who dealt harshly with those who dared to challenge their authority. It was a veritable national uprising, on a pattern adopted by revolutionary movements in many parts of Asia in years to come.²

The agrarian movement that developed in the Baltic provinces had several similar features. Landless labourers went on strike in support of a demand for a guaranteed minimum wage. They often had the backing of peasant smallholders, whose economic and juridical position was most unsatisfactory. The German-speaking landowners generally reacted to the threat of revolution in a determined manner. Unlike most of their Russian colleagues, who tended to adopt a defeatist attitude, they attempted to quell the rebels by force. The ferocity of their reprisals made the situation in the Baltic provinces particularly acute.³

[In the ethnically Russian areas the peasants expressed their disaffection on a less extensive scale.] Trouble began early in February in Kursk province and soon spread to several areas in the black-earth belt. Over 4,000 people were later punished for taking part in raids on landed estates, 40 of which were ravaged or destroyed.⁴ The movement seems

¹ F. E. Makharadze and G. V. Khachapuridze, *Ocherki po istorii rabochego i krest'yanskogo dvizheniya v Gruzii* (M., 1932), p. 185.

² Uratadze MSS., Russian Archive, New York; *DiM*, i. 591-2.

³ I. Yanson, in *PR* (1922), no. 12, pp. 16ff.; A. von Engelhardt, *Die deutschen Ostseeprovinzen Russlands* (Munich, 1916), pp. 84ff.; *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1925), no. 11-12, pp. 275ff.

⁴ *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1935), no. 73, pp. 126-69, esp. p. 132.

to have derived its initial stimulus from the modest concessions made by the Government, which the peasants chose to interpret after their own fashion as an authorization to engage in any kind of licence. They felt instinctively that the officials were losing their grip, and that this gave them a chance to settle old scores. In their favour they had the factor of surprise: by the time police or troops reached the scene, the operation was over. Their greatest weakness was lack of organization. The S.R.s set up a national Peasant Union, but when it held its first congress, in Moscow late in August, there were few men present who could be considered truly representative of peasant opinion.

It was even harder to revolutionize the peasants in uniform who made up the bulk of the armed forces. Relatively few incidents occurred while the war was still in progress. The most dramatic, which at once assumed an honoured place in the mythology of the Russian revolutionary movement, was the mutiny on the battleship *Prince Potemkin of Taurus*, one of the most modern vessels in the Russian fleet. For eleven days (13-24 June) it sailed the Black Sea in the hands of its crew, until it was eventually obliged to seek sanctuary in a neutral port. This sensational exploit aroused intense interest abroad and dealt a severe blow to the Government's prestige. But its effect upon the internal situation in Russia does not seem to have been particularly important. It could have posed a serious threat to the régime only if the vessel's arrival in Odessa had touched off a successful general strike in that city. But none of the numerous left-wing groups in Odessa could give the mutineers a strong lead, and the disorders that took place petered out in an outburst of anarchic destruction. It is important to bear in mind the difference between Odessa, a cosmopolitan commercial port, and a centre such as Tiflis or Łódź. In the latter city Polish workers had shortly before erected barricades in the streets and fought a series of pitched battles with Russian troops (5-11 June), in which 172 civilians lost their lives.¹ In Tiflis at this time violent disturbances took place which developed into a general strike. This provided further proof that the revolutionary movement attained greatest intensity where it was fed by national animosities, although these were often obscured by internationalist phraseology. There was ample material here for conflict.

The forces of socialism, although rapidly growing, were still deeply divided, as well as the national divisions, there were the differences between Marxists and Populists, moderates and radicals. This helps to account for the fact that throughout the spring and summer of 1905 the liberals continued to occupy the forefront of the political stage. To keep pace with events they were obliged to move far to the left. Many

¹ I. Volkovicher, in M. N. Pokrovsky (ed.), 1905 (M.-Lg., 1925-7), II. 168-80.

zemstvo assemblies and other public bodies responded to the news of 'Bloody Sunday' by adopting strongly-worded resolutions in favour of radical reform. Faced with mounting pressure the Government yielded. In February Nicholas took the decision from which he had shrunk two months earlier—to summon a representative assembly. In a rescript to the new Minister of the Interior, A. I. Bulygin, he declared his intention 'to attract worthy men enjoying the confidence of the people [*narod*], elected by the population [*naselenie*], to participate in the preliminary elaboration and discussion of legislative proposals'. The cautious wording indicated that the assembly was to be a mere consultative body; nothing was said about the electoral system. The circumstances of the announcement made it clear that the move was designed to strengthen the autocracy against what an accompanying manifesto referred to as 'the movement of mutiny'. Liberals were disappointed that the drafting of the reform was entrusted to officials—although members of the public were invited to submit their own suggestions for improvements 'in the good ordering of the State'. This last provision was important: logically, it implied that public bodies had the right to meet and discuss their proposals before submitting them. It was no longer clear whether the laws restricting freedom of speech and association were valid or not. In practice the police were obliged to close their eyes to numerous breaches of the law, and to tolerate the activities of bodies that had no formal right to exist.

Such organizations were now multiplying rapidly. The most important of them was the Bureau of Zemstvo Congresses, which arranged further gatherings on the lines of its successful November meeting. These congresses, held at irregular intervals, served as a kind of unofficial parliament. The deputies, who were now chosen on an orderly representative basis, found themselves in the enviable position of enjoying immense authority without being overburdened by formal responsibilities. In April they put forward a demand for what was in effect a constituent assembly, although for tactical reasons the term was avoided. All of them were agreed that the suffrage should be universal, equal and secret, and over half those present (71 delegates out of 125) held that it should also be direct. This demand, known in the jargon of the day as 'the four-tailed formula', originated with the Liberation League. In February it had been endorsed by the Union of Zemstvo Constitutionalists, its more conservative affiliate, only a small Slavophile group led by Shipov resisting the general leftward trend. The Liberation League also gave an impetus to the creation of several radical professional associations. All of these pursued frankly political aims and showed little concern at the fact that they were not fully representative of opinion in their respective professions. Early

in May fourteen of them joined together in a loose grouping known as the 'League of Unions' (*Soyuz Soyuzov*), which under the vigorous leadership of P. N. Milyukov soon came to overshadow its parent body. Within the new League there was a continual tug-of-war between the more moderate unions and those that stood further to the left, some of which were sympathetic to the Social Democrats.¹ What was at this time loosely termed 'the movement of Russian society' resembled a team of galloping horses, with those behind pounding hard on the heels of those ahead and causing them to veer towards the left. In all these ostensibly democratic organizations it was not the rank and file but the leaders who formulated policy, and they naturally kept in close contact with one another. In practice the more representative bodies often provided a platform for the views of a small minority external to the organization itself. But it would be an exaggeration to regard the liberal movement as fraudulent: conditions were far too chaotic to allow any systematic infiltration and manipulation by revolutionary groups, even if the latter had been determined to pursue such a policy. All the opposition groups were propelled forwards by the wave of popular enthusiasm, which they were anxious to bring under control.

Meanwhile the amiable, but congenitally lazy, Minister of the Interior watched these developments with puzzled concern. Real authority at this time lay in the hands of Nicholas' close adviser D. F. Trepov, who in May was appointed Bulygin's deputy and chief of police, with virtually dictatorial powers.² When news came of the catastrophe at Tsushima the *zemstvo* men hurriedly called their third congress, at which the left and right wings agreed to drop their differences and unite in pressing the Government to make immediate concessions. On 6 June a deputation went to Tsarskoye Selo. Its spokesman, the widely respected S. N. Trubetskoy, drew a grim picture of the country's predicament, appealed to the Tsar's sense of patriotism, and urged him to convoke at once a representative assembly constituted 'equally and without distinction by all your subjects'—a phrase carefully designed not to offend Nicholas' susceptibilities. The latter replied in equally ambiguous terms, confirming that he would honour his promises but giving no further details of the Government's plans. However, it soon became known that the law being drafted by an official commission would fall far short of the aspirations of 'society'.

¹ S. D. K[irpichnikov], *Soyuz soyuzov* (Spb., 1906) and 'L. I. Lutugin i Soyuz soyuzov', in *Byloye* (1925), no. 34, pp. 134-46; P. N. Milyukov, *Vospominaniya* (N.Y., 1955), i. 265ff. D. Sverchkov (op. cit., p. 107) describes the political orientation of the member unions.

² S. Yu. Witte, *Vospominaniya*, ii. 344-53; A. A. Mosolov, *Pri dvore Imperatora* (Riga, 1937), pp. 119-31; Lyubimov MSS., Russian Archive, New York. The actual extent of Trepov's authority was less than Witte suggests.

This helped to recruit support for the radical League of Unions, which had roundly condemned the idea of a direct approach to the sovereign. One month later a further congress was held, attended by representatives of the municipalities as well as the *zemstva*. The 235 deputies present endorsed a constitutional draft of their own and adopted a 'manifesto to the people' in which they declared their intention 'to enter into the closest contact with the broad masses of the population, to discuss with them the impending political reform, and to capture the freedom necessary for it to be brought into being'.¹

[It seemed at this point as though the *zemstvo* men were about to identify themselves wholly with the cause of revolution. But instead the Government succeeded in temporarily regaining the initiative. On 6 August it published an edict defining the make-up and powers of the new assembly, the State Duma. It was to be a purely consultative body, with no authority to control the actions of the executive. The inviolability of the autocratic principle was expressly confirmed.] The deputies were to be chosen by a limited section of the population, according to a complex system of indirect voting, with three separate *curiae* for landowners, townspeople, and peasants.² The whole project had a distinctly archaic air. Had it been granted some years earlier it would have been widely welcomed; now it merely aroused indignation. However, for all its manifest drawbacks it achieved one of the chief aims of its authors: it touched off a passionate debate within the opposition as to the tactics that should be adopted in the forthcoming elections, and the assembly itself when it came into being. The precarious unity re-established in May was once again disrupted. Should they demonstrate their contempt for the 'Bulygin Duma' by boycotting it? Or should they participate, in the hope of thereby winning further constitutional concessions? The question was nicely calculated to set the various rival groups at loggerheads. In general the radicals were for a boycott and the moderates for participation, although the line of division was not always clear-cut. The Central Bureau of the League of Unions was in two minds; so, too, were the leaders of the constituent unions, which held their own congresses at this time. It was feared that the discussion would rend the organization apart.³ In mid-September the delegates of the *zemstva* and towns conferred once again, and after much heart-searching decided in favour of participation. Simultaneously disagreements came to a head over the agrarian question and the rights of national minorities. On the former issue the congress

¹ B. B. Veselovsky, iii. 617ff.; D. N. Shipov, pp. 310ff.; I. P. Belokonsky, *Zemskoye dvizhenie* (M., 1914), pp. 272ff.

² *Gosudarstvennaya Duma v Rossii v dokumentakh i materialakh*, ed. F. I. Kalinychev (M., 1957), pp. 30-54.

³ S. D. K[irpichnikov], op. cit., p. 15.

overruled its right wing, and endorsed radical proposals for the compulsory expropriation of estates where necessary to assuage the peasants' land hunger; the owners were to receive compensation at a just valuation, which might be less than the market price. The congress also declared its readiness to grant the Poles autonomy and other minorities self-determination in cultural matters, together with greater powers of self-government 'where necessary'—a vague formula that concealed the sharp differences of opinion that existed on this issue.

[These dissensions strengthened the hand of the Government. So, too—and in the long run this was doubtless more important—did the conclusion of the treaty of Portsmouth (29 August N.S.), which brought the inglorious war to a reasonably satisfactory close. It released large numbers of troops for service against the Government's domestic opponents. In the first half of September labour unrest, which had been declining in previous months, dropped to an almost negligible level.] The optimists in official circles believed that the worst was over, and that they could rely on the Duma and the army to complete the task of pacifying the country.

This calculation left several factors out of account, notably the growing strength of the extreme left. [By September 1905 the Social Democrats had ceased to be a sect, as they had been before 9 January, and were becoming a force that could no longer be ignored. They still lacked an effective nation-wide organization, but their local cadres could make their weight felt at a moment of crisis. Within a few weeks, partly under the influence of their agitation, Russian labour was to deal the autocracy a crippling blow.]

The fluid situation that developed in Russia during the autumn of 1904 presented the Social Democrats with a challenge they were ill prepared to meet. At that time the R.S.D.R.P. was still eking out a precarious existence in defiance of the law. In theory, at any rate, it was governed on strict centralist principles by leaders who lived many hundreds of miles distant from the mills and factories where its main endeavours were concentrated. This rigid structure rendered it resistant to change. The natural conservatism of the Party leaders, the product of their ideological approach, was enhanced by the factional schism. They were reluctant to embark upon experiments that could be used by their opponents to discredit them.

One of the most important effects of the revolution was to weaken the authority of the *émigré* leaders *vis-à-vis* the local committee-men, who could not help but be more alive to the need to adjust the Party's tactics to the demands of a rapidly changing situation. They were often openly critical of the theorists for continuing to behave as though

nothing had changed. This resentment was felt still more keenly by the young enthusiasts who were now being drawn into the movement. They had little or no interest in doctrinal conflicts, which seemed to them dangerously irrelevant at a moment when all true revolutionaries should be rallying their forces against the foe. They were not concerned with the rights and wrongs of the schism. While favourably disposed towards Bolshevik policies on account of their ultra-revolutionary aspect, they had little sympathy with Lenin's struggle to shape the Party according to his own design. His preoccupation with his feud against the Mensheviks seemed in their view to reflect a regrettable narrowness of outlook. The Menshevik leaders experienced a similar devaluation of their authority. Although the Party activists resident abroad flocked back to Russia in droves after January 1905, the top-ranking *émigrés* were slow to follow their example. For this there was a reasonable explanation: if they returned before an amnesty were granted, they ran an exceptionally high risk of discovery and arrest, and could expect heavy penalties. Both Plekhanov and Axelrod happened to be immobilized by illness. Martov and Dan were engrossed in the task of editing *Iskra*. The only prominent leader who made his way back to Russia at this time was Trotsky; he was also the least inflexible in his analysis of events. But after some weeks in Kiev and St. Petersburg he was obliged to flee to Finland, and it was not until October that he succeeded in exerting any appreciable influence.¹

The Central Committee did what it could in the face of tremendous obstacles. It had a technical staff of some thirty-five to forty persons. During the twelve-month period ending in April 1905 it distributed over forty tons of illegal literature to local committees and groups, about one-quarter of which was smuggled in from abroad. It also engaged in publishing activities on its own account, and was responsible for the Party's most successful enterprise, the secret printing-press at Baku. In two years this produced no less than nine tons of material, including reprints of some issues of *Iskra*.² But technical expertise was no real substitute for political leadership, and the C.C.'s efforts to co-ordinate the activities of the local groups were severely hampered by the schism. According to Krasin, its most active and capable member, the atmosphere in which it worked was one of 'general apathy, mistrust, scepticism, and obstruction'. He spent much of his time trying to counter efforts by the Mensheviks, and also by Lenin, to undermine his

¹ L. D. Trotsky, 'Avtobiograficheskaya zametka', in *PR* (1921), no. 3, pp. 244-9; *Moya zhizn'* (Berlin, 1930), i. 194-7; I. Deutscher, *The prophet armed* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 116ff.

² See Krasin's report in *Tretyy s'yezd RSDRP: protokoly* [hereafter cited as *Prot. III*] (M., 1959), pp. 471-95. A graphic description of the workings of this printing-press is given by A. Yenukidze in *PR* (1923), no. 14, pp. 108-66.

authority. Then came a serious blow: in February 1905 the C.C. was surprised by the police while in conclave in the Moscow apartment of the writer Leonid Andreyev. Nine of the eleven members in Russia were arrested. Krasin himself was one of the survivors; but for some weeks thereafter he was absorbed by preparations for the IIIrd Party congress. The new C.C. elected at this gathering consisted wholly of Bolsheviks: Lenin, Krasin, A. A. Bogdanov, A. I. Rykov, and D. S. Postolovsky. Their authority was contested by those who regarded the congress as unconstitutional, and their activities do not seem to have been notably successful. Three months after the new C.C. took office the Party organization at Samara wrote to complain at the lack of guidance it was providing: 'Once again your voice is nowhere to be heard. It is as though we were adrift without a rudder. Things cannot go on like this any longer. Unless you take active steps to keep us informed, it will be absolutely impossible for us to put your point of view across.'¹

The scope of the Party's influence thus depended in the main on the energy and efficiency displayed by the leaders of the local committees, and this in turn depended on a number of chance factors, not the least of which was the degree of vigilance shown by the local *gendarmérie*. The Social Democrats, like the other revolutionary parties, benefited more than they recognized from the administrative confusion that prevailed at this time. For example, in February the police arrested thirty-three people attending a meeting at Yekaterinoslav, among them all the members of the local Party committee. The provincial governor overruled police objections and within a month they had been released, free to continue their activities. A similar incident occurred at Kharkov a few weeks later. At Saratov the leader of the committee, Topuridze, was related by marriage to the local police chief, who sympathized actively with the Party's aims.² Such laxity was the exception rather than the rule. But those arrested for revolutionary agitation now generally received more lenient sentences than had been usual in earlier years. B. Knunyants, one of the leading Bolsheviks in Moscow, who was arrested in March, was jailed for four months.³ At Dvinsk the local Social Democrats were able to hold regular public meetings in the market square: each of the left-wing parties had its allotted pitch, and any gendarmes who ventured to intervene were liable to be physically assaulted. In the circumstances they showed little zeal for law

¹ Cited from unpublished archival source by N. I. Kuznetsov in *Voprosy istorii KPSS* (1958), no. 6, p. 158.

² S. I. Gopner, in *Voprosy istorii* (1955), no. 3, p. 28; V. I. Nevsky, in *PR* (1923), no. 15, p. 64; 1905 g. v *Khar'kove*, ed. S. Kramer (Kharkov, 1925), p. 265; *KiS* (1931), no. 74, pp. 142ff.

³ B. Peres, in *Pervaya russkaya revolyutsiya* (Lg.-M., 1925), i. 107.

enforcement.¹ The paid informers employed by the police, never distinguished for their intelligence, were bewildered by the pace of events, as their reports plainly showed; and the authorities could not spare enough men to follow up all the evidence of illegal activities that came their way. The overcrowded prisons continued to fulfil their traditional role as universities of revolution, in which those experienced in the lore of the underground passed on their skills to those for whom this was their first encounter with the law.

In this situation the local Social-Democratic committees were able to expand their work. Subordinate groups sprang up in city districts (*rayons*) and in the smaller provincial towns. Since no formalities were involved in joining the Party, it is impossible to give any reliable estimate of its strength at this juncture. In St. Petersburg, where its influence was considerable, the number of 'organized workers' may have exceeded 1,000 by the spring of 1905.² There were fewer in Moscow, where the organization was still no larger than it was in such nearby industrial centres as Ivanovo-Voznesensk. In August there were 500 Social Democrats at Nizhny Novgorod and 250 at Kazan. In many Great Russian provincial towns there were groups about 100 strong. The situation was more favourable further to the south. Party supporters numbered about 1,000 in Odessa and Yekaterinoslav, 500 in Kiev, and 300 in Kharkov and Rostov-on-Don. In Transcaucasia the reckoning was in thousands rather than in hundreds, as it was also in the western region—although the Social Democrats here belonged to the Bund, and the R.S.D.R.P. had only a few small scattered groups.³

A committee might consist of anything up to a dozen members, but usually less. There were as a rule one or two men to whom the others looked for leadership. Often these were the actual founders of the group, in which case they enjoyed a special degree of prestige and authority. Their colleagues were not prepared to accept their rulings without further ado, and there was plenty of opportunity for lively discussion and argument—especially where men from both factions were present. The committee would generally meet every few days, a special apartment being reserved for this purpose. (One activist tells the story of a debate which became so vehement that the owner of the

¹ I. Yurenev, in *PR* (1922), no. 12, p. 132.

² S. I. Somov (Peskin), *op. cit.*, p. 152. In March S. I. Gusev gave the same figure as the number of pro-Bolshevik 'organized workers' (*Lenin*, xxviii. 458); the Mensheviks claimed to have 400–500 in February (*Byulleteni dlya partiynykh organizatsiy* (Geneva, 1905), no. 3). By October there were some 3,000 Party members in the city, divided approximately equally between the two factions (O. Anweiler, *Die Rätebewegung in Russland, 1905–21* (Leiden, 1958), p. 93).

³ [Yu. O.] Martov, in *OD*, iii. 572; for Odessa, see *PR* (1925), no. 46, p. 9; for Kazan, *PR* (1923), no. 14, p. 277; for Moscow, S. Chernomordik (ed.), *Put' k oktyabryu* (M., 1923), iii. 18.

apartment, unaware of the identity of her noisy visitors and thinking a brawl must be in progress, summoned the police; the participants had to save themselves by flight.) Even where the committee consisted of adherents of one faction only, there might often be an 'opposition' group. Differences of personal temperament could lead to a conflict which the disputants would then seek to rationalize in political terms. The opposition would complain that the leaders were acting dictatorially, and would appeal for support to what was picturesquely called 'the periphery'—i.e. those who served as propagandists or agitators but were not members of the committee. Their loudly-protested devotion to democratic principles did not need to be taken too seriously. The composition of the committees was constantly changing, as a result of discovery and arrest, or the assignment of members to work in another centre, where their services might be required to resuscitate a group disrupted by police action. The 'professional revolutionaries', who lived illegally on false passports, were in any case accustomed to change their place of residence every few months in order to avoid arousing suspicion. These personnel shifts could often be turned to good account by protagonists of one faction or the other.¹ Committee members also had the right of co-optation, and this could likewise be abused. As for the social origin of the committee-men, this was a cause of frequent complaint. In May 1905 a dissatisfied group of workers at Cherkassy on the Dnieper stated:

Even now we see that all the higher posts are occupied by intellectuals. One has to hunt for workers with a lamp. . . . When a worker, even if an 'advanced' one, suggests some means of improving the agitation, he is told to mind his business and do as he is told, so that the voice of every worker in this so-called 'workers' party' is reduced to nil.²

The committee-men moved in a world of their own. This was true even in the physical sense: the organization's headquarters were as a rule situated in the more fashionable districts of a town, where they were less likely to be detected than in a working-class suburb. The committee-men spent a great deal of time in taking security precautions, and in maintaining the discreet personal contacts that might keep their organization alive if they should nevertheless be discovered. This necessitated elaborate systems of passwords, codes, and secret addresses (*yavki*) at which meetings could be held or correspondence collected. This conspiratorial work had its justification as a means of defence against the ubiquitous police spies; but it is not unfair to say that it also met a psychological need on the part of the committee-men themselves,

¹ See below, pp. 205–7.

² Leaflet dated 18 May 1905, issued by *Rabochaya Volya* ('Workers' Will') group, Cherkassy, in Axelrod Archives, Amsterdam.

who relished the risks they took in the service of their high ideals. As one of them remarked later: 'Romanticism is a quality inherent in human nature. It drew sustenance from life "underground". Perhaps many of our addresses, passwords, etc. . . . appeared more attractive to us because their purpose was enshrouded in a certain mystification.'¹ The effects were more often than not quite harmless. But for some *konspiratsiya* could become almost an obsession. In general it tended to consolidate the position of the intellectuals in the Party, who controlled the links between the rank and file and the outside world.

As a rule each member of a committee was charged with responsibility for a particular branch of its activities, or for a particular district of the city. In the latter case he served as representative of the senior body on the district committee, and the channel through which the latter was controlled. One of his duties was to scrutinize applications for membership; but this right seems to have been exercised rather loosely, since working-class members of the district committees resisted the pretensions of the centre. The district committee in turn controlled the sub-district (*podrayon*), which usually meant no more than a single factory, where the Party might have a nucleus of supporters or simply an individual 'agent'. In the larger industrial concerns there might be groups or agents in each workshop or department.

This had the makings of a bureaucratic system. As one activist put it somewhat caustically: 'In the underground there came into being a world which in certain essential respects resembled the régime that existed "above ground" '—that is to say, the apparatus of autocracy.² The committee-men enjoyed the exercise of power. They liked making appointments and allotting functions, drawing up elaborate plans of future activities, or holding conferences. At these meetings those present would deliver detailed reports and adopt long-winded resolutions, with as many as half a dozen clauses of introductory motivation. They were not too perturbed by the fact that in most cases such resolutions, adopted in the name of the organization as a whole, had not been debated beforehand at a lower level; or that, where there had been a discussion, the participants had not been fully informed about the issues involved. Sometimes the organization itself might have a semi-fictional character. The committee-men gladly dispensed with formalities—except those that helped to bolster their own authority. Having invented convenient fictions to legitimize their exercise of power, in the course of time they grew so accustomed to them that they accepted them as true. In this way, half-unwittingly, they came to lose touch with reality. It was a curious paradox that such hard-headed

¹ V. Sokolov, in *PR* (1922), no. 7, p. 187.

² S. I. Somov (Peskin), *op. cit.*, p. 23.

men of action, engaged in a desperate struggle in which their own liberty was always at stake, should to a large extent live in a make-believe world of their own creation. Such was their self-assurance that they deceived themselves as to the extent of their popular support, confusing the actual circumstances that confronted them with the imaginary situation they desired to bring about. This tendency to indulge in fantasy was less common among the rank and file, and does much to explain the tension that developed between them and the intellectuals.

If the hierarchy of committees was, so to speak, the Party's skeleton, then its bloodstream was the torrent of propaganda that flowed from its printing-presses. By 1905 there was one in every important local organization, and sometimes in district committees as well, although as a rule the latter had to be content with less sophisticated equipment. The larger presses had a semi-autonomous status. Their whereabouts were kept a closely-guarded secret, known only to one or two members of the committee. Suitable accommodation was to be found only in the more prosperous districts. Sometimes those responsible would pose as a wealthy married couple, whose occasional 'guests' would bring the necessary supplies and collect the finished product. The work was considered particularly onerous—not only because of the continual risk of detection, but also, characteristically enough, because it involved prolonged isolation from the company of Party comrades. For it was a feeling of 'belongingness' that gave the revolutionary activist much of the emotional impetus that sustained him in his endeavours.

The normal procedure was for the press to execute commissions given it by the committee. Some well-entrenched organizations were able to produce periodical news-sheets giving detailed information about industrial unrest in the region. But the bulk of the literature published consisted of leaflets and proclamations, which would be distributed, by youths sympathetic to the Party's aims, in the streets or at places of work. They may be broadly classified into three groups. Some were primarily denunciatory in character: that is to say, they contained a critical exposition of measures announced or intended by the authorities, together with comment on the general political situation. Others had a more direct agitational purpose: for example, they would list demands on behalf of striking workmen or other disaffected groups, in which their grievances were related to the Party's own *credo*. Both these types of document were usually couched in crude and violent terms, with the aim of arousing the strongest possible emotions. They ended in a stereotyped manner with *vivats* for the constituent assembly, the eight-hour day, and the R.S.D.R.P. itself. The facts they reported were often far from exact—although it is only fair to add that reliable news about current developments was difficult

to obtain. The third type, of a more practical character, gave information or instructions concerning outbreaks planned in the area. The total number of illegal publications put out by the Party during 1905 runs into millions of copies. The scale of this activity mounted from month to month. In November 1904 the relatively uninfluential committee at Kazan issued thirteen leaflets, in a total edition of 5,000 copies. By January its output had doubled; in March it published 17,000 items, and in June about twice that number.¹ Some of the leaflets issued by *Iskra*, which were reprinted locally, achieved a total edition of 200,000 copies.²

The impact of the printed word was reinforced by a flood of oratory. It was now that the public meeting came into its own as a medium of mass communication. The more influential committees had under their sway a body engagingly called 'the college of agitators'. These men soon acquired considerable rhetorical skill, and even a personal following, attested by the half-affectionate, half-derogatory nicknames they were sometimes given.³ Party activists drew a distinction between two types of meeting, the *letuchka* and the *massovka*. The former was a simple affair. Accompanied by a few comrades, the agitator would station himself at some strategic point—perhaps the gates of a factory as the men poured forth after the daily shift, and make an impromptu speech; if all went well, the symbolic red banner would be unfurled and a stack of leaflets distributed among the bystanders; as soon as the gendarmes arrived the whole company would take to their heels. The *massovka* needed more thorough preparation. In the early days it was usually held in fields or woods on the outskirts of the town, and was as much an enjoyable social occasion as anything else. There would be an opportunity for uninhibited oratory and the communal singing of revolutionary songs; and the risks involved gave those present the feeling that they were participating in a worth-while adventure. When the authorities realized what lay behind these apparently harmless picnics, detachments of cossacks would be sent to patrol roads and tracks leading out of town, and the day might well end in violence.

Clashes with police and troops also occurred when agitators led protest marches through the streets. The official accounts of such incidents usually claimed that the authorities had acted only under extreme provocation, while the reports that appeared in the Party press depicted the marchers as innocent of any aggressive intent. As a rule the truth lay somewhere between the two extremes. The men's leaders

¹ S. Livshits, in *PR* (1923), no. 14, p. 241.

² [Yu. O.] Martov, p. 568.

³ E.g., N. Golubev 'Chetyrekhglaziy' ('The Four-eyed') and P. Larionov 'Chernomordik' ('Black Snout'), well-known figures in Baku and Moscow respectively.

normally endeavoured to restrain them from indiscriminate assaults on the police or damage to property—not least because the outcome of such violence could not be foreseen; but sometimes it was impossible for them to hold their followers in check, especially where their passions had been inflamed by hours of speech-making. The troops were trained to obey orders unthinkingly; and although they were sometimes able to avert a menacing situation by tact and presence of mind, on occasion they acted from fear or foolishness, and so precipitated unnecessary bloodshed. It was not unknown for individual police officers to concert operations with the leaders of local ‘black hundred’ mobs.

It was partly in response to this threat that in 1905 many Party committees set up their own militia units, the so-called *boyevye druzhiny*. The name *druzhina*, calling to mind the warrior heroes of Kievan Russia, did these motley bands more than justice. Their arms ranged from knives and daggers, crudely fashioned at the factory bench, to revolvers and shotguns procured for them by their leaders. In some cases their members underwent a rather perfunctory training in combat methods. But their activities were on a very amateur level. Whatever the potential significance of the *druzhiny* as forerunners of the Red Guards of 1917, they did not at this stage constitute a serious threat to law and order. Their main effect was perhaps psychological, in that they accustomed Party members to the idea of using physical violence, the legitimacy of which most of them had hitherto recognized only in the abstract.

Attached to the Central Committee was a so-called ‘Technical Group’ which endeavoured to provide Party militia units with weapons and ammunition. It was staffed by a handful of young enthusiasts (some with rather exalted social backgrounds), who worked in almost complete isolation from other Party agencies. Their efforts to obtain arms abroad were largely frustrated by the activities of an *agent provocateur* in Berlin.¹ Attempts were also made to fabricate bombs in St. Petersburg, but although a professor of chemistry gave technical advice to those involved the results scarcely justified the labour expended. Ostensibly these weapons were designed for use in an insurrection. But there was always a temptation among those most eager to undertake such activity to perpetrate individual terrorist *coups*. During a strike at Yekaterinoslav at the end of June bombs were thrown at a police-station by a man named I. Mikhaylov, who appears to have been a Party

¹ S. M. Pozner (ed.), 1905: *Boyevaya gru ppa pri TsK RSDRP(b)* (M.-Lg., 1927), esp. pp. 29, 43ff., 150ff.; L. B. Krasin, *Gody podpol'ya* (M.-Lg., 1928), pp. 237ff. The Social Democrats were involved in the incident of the ship *John Grafton*, wrecked off the Finnish coast in September 1905 with a cargo of arms destined for various revolutionary organizations. For details, see the recent study by M. Futrell, *Northern Underground . . .*, 1863–1917 (L., 1963), pp. 66–84.

member.¹ Tendencies of this kind were strongest in the Urals, Transcaucasia, and the western provinces. Most Party spokesmen condemned these excesses on practical grounds.

Zealots could find another outlet for their energies in the 'military groups' attached to several committees, whose task it was to subvert the loyalty of men in the forces. The work was difficult and dangerous. A civilian who entered army barracks was soon liable to be detected. Contact could be made with troops while they were off duty. Sometimes discussion circles would be organized, and there were even cases of *massovki* attended by dozens of men in uniform. Severe penalties under military law awaited those who were discovered, and such organizations seldom lasted for more than a few weeks. One problem was that men and units were continually being posted elsewhere, so that systematic propaganda over a long period was almost impossible.²

One of the towns where the Party had most success in this kind of work was Sevastopol, principal base of the Black Sea fleet. By the spring of 1905 the small Menshevik organization here, a branch of the Crimean Union, had groups in six capital ships, including the *Potemkin*. But the mutiny in this vessel was not planned by the Sevastopol committee and actually ran counter to its plans.³ Matyushenko, the sailor who emerged as the principal rebel leader, was sympathetic to the Party's aims but not to its discipline. He and his fellow-mutineers acted largely by instinct, as indeed was only to be expected in the circumstances. The Social Democrats in Odessa were taken unawares by the arrival of the warship in the harbour. The six socialist organizations in the city set up a joint committee to decide what they should

¹ S. M. Pozner, p. 122.

² K. Rozenblyum, *Voyennye organizatsii bol'shevikov 1905-7 gg.* (M.-Lg., 1931), pp. 120-32.

³ Some Bolshevik historians have blamed 'opportunist elements' for the failure of the *Potemkin* rising. The mutineers, it is said, should have been urged to bombard the city, which would have 'revolutionized' the garrison; established a local provisional government, and extended its power throughout the Ukraine. Such arguments carry little conviction in view of the weakness of the revolutionary groups, particularly the Bolsheviks, in the area at the time. Lenin's emissary, Vasilyev-Yuzhin, arrived in Odessa several days after the *Potemkin* had sailed. Of their local leaders Yaroslavsky and Shapovalov were incapacitated by illness, and Knipovich by her female sex. Levitsky was absent on vacation, and the ubiquitous Gusev, who was visiting Odessa at the time, seems to have spent the time in idle talk. Later Korinevsky, a 'Party-minded' Bolshevik who advocated collaboration with other left-wing groups, was expelled from the Odessa committee, apparently as a scapegoat. Lenin's view at the time was that 'although it is of course very painful that the composition of the committee was so unsatisfactory . . . it's no use crying over spilt milk' (A. S. Shapovalov, *V podpol' ye: na puti k marksizmu* (M.-Lg., 1927), pp. 128ff.; *PR* (1925), no. 46, pp. 22ff.).

do. But much time was lost wrangling over trivialities, and the advice they gave the mutineers was tactically unsound.¹

These insurrectionary efforts, although they came to acquire a certain retrospective glamour, were really no more than a fringe activity at this time. The main emphasis of the Party's work lay on mass agitation in the urban centres. The really important problem facing the Social Democrats in 1905 was to consolidate such influence as they had acquired in organizational form. No one expected the Party itself to expand in numbers until it embraced the entire 'proletariat'—or even thought such an eventuality desirable. It was taken for granted that it would exert its influence indirectly, through the medium of 'broad' organizations created spontaneously from below. But in their interminable discussions of the so-called 'organization question' the theorists had devoted very little consideration to the practical issues involved in the exercise of such indirect control. How was it to be reconciled with the natural tendency of mass organizations to develop an identity of their own? The emergence of trade unions and similar bodies in the main centres during the first half of 1905 caught the Party unawares.

In St. Petersburg this problem presented itself with particular acuteness soon after Bloody Sunday. On 29 January the Government announced that it would set up a commission, under the chairmanship of Senator Shidlovsky, to investigate the grievances of industrial workers in the capital and the means of alleviating them. The commission was to consist partly of officials and partly of elected members representative of both sides in industry. The workers were to choose their deputies indirectly: in each of the nine constituencies into which the city was divided for the purpose they were to choose 'electors' (*vyborshchiki*), who would then meet jointly to select the actual deputies. The scheme aroused lively interest, since the shooting on 9 January had not caused all workers to abandon hope that the Government might take some action on their behalf. Among the local Social-Democratic leaders only a few doctrinaires argued that the elections should be boycotted. The general feeling was that these new opportunities to promote the Party's influence should be utilized to the full. This decision was forced upon them by the demands of real life and owed little to the belated and somewhat confusing advice they received from abroad.² Agitators

¹ See footnote 3 on page 174.

² From Gusev's rather evasive account (*PR* (1924), no. 35, pp. 10-50) it is clear that a 'leftist' element in the Bolshevik committee, led by V. Livshits, advocated a boycott and succeeded in disrupting the efforts of Gusev and others to 'revolutionize' one of the pre-electoral meetings. But Martov exaggerates the strength of these tendencies (*OD*, iii. 545-6). A detailed study of this question has recently been made by S. M. Schwarz in his unpublished paper, 'Bol'shevizm i men'shevizm v ikh otnosheniyakh k massovomu rabochemu dvizheniyu', ch. II.

toured the factories pressing the view that Shidlovsky's commission could perform a useful service only if its chairman were induced to accept certain demands. The most important of these were that the deputies should be guaranteed personal inviolability and complete freedom to express their opinions, and that delegates to the commission would be elected in other towns as well. It was calculated that these conditions would be rejected by the Government, which would be obliged to abandon its plans; this would intensify the men's indignation and finally convince them that they could place no trust in the present régime.

These tactics paid better dividends than the Party activists could have anticipated. The police did not seriously obstruct the pre-electoral agitation, and when the 372 *vyborshchiki* were chosen on 13 February a large number of them turned out to be Party sympathizers.¹ Despite this the authorities allowed the elections to proceed. Four days later the *vyborshchiki* duly assembled and put forward their terms. When the authorities failed to reply they dispersed, without electing any deputies, after adopting a resolution sponsored by the Social Democrats calling for 'the transfer of State power into the hands of the people'. On 20 February the Government announced that in view of the men's obstructive attitude the Shidlovsky commission would not meet.

The Social Democrats of the capital could claim their first major success. They had humiliated the Government; their demands had been widely publicized; and they had gained a hold over the allegiance of numbers of men who one month earlier had pinned their hopes on Father Gapon. Last but not least, they had the elements of a mass organization amenable to their influence. In many factories the *vyborshchiki* continued to be regarded by the men as their spokesmen.²

Much the same thing was happening, although on a less significant scale, in other centres where there was industrial strife. Representative bodies sprang up at factory or workshop level in which local Party activists could often make their influence felt. These were informal *ad hoc* organizations, which in many instances lacked even a name. Born in the course of a strike, they would continue to exercise authority once the conflict had been settled. They naturally tended to drift into some form of closer association. Where this took place on a professional basis, this produced the nucleus of a trade union; where the basis was

¹ D. Koltsov states that 20 per cent. were Social Democrats, 40 per cent. 'progressive', 35 per cent. non-political, and 5 per cent. conservative (*OD*, ii. 198). According to Somov (*op. cit.*, p. 47) some of the non-political electors had their qualifications vetted beforehand by Party militants and were in fact politically committed.

² P. Kolokolnikov, in *Materialy po istorii professional'nogo dvizheniya v Rossii* (M., 1924-5), iii. 214.

territorial, they would sometimes refer to themselves as a 'soviet', or council. At this time no one could have foreseen the connotations this simple term would eventually acquire.¹ Of the two types of organization the trade unions seemed the more promising, although they were of course still pitifully weak. The idea that a permanent association could serve to promote their economic interests was still a novel one for Russian workers, and they were at first reluctant to take the step of joining a union (and paying for its upkeep) until they were convinced that this would bring them real advantages. They were content to leave questions of organization to those individuals, usually intellectuals, who had taken the initiative in forming the association. Another difficulty was that the more militant elements tended to scorn trade-union work as humdrum and prosaic. This attitude stemmed partly from superficial acquaintance with Social-Democratic teachings, and partly from the men's confidence in their own strength. It was characteristic that throughout 1905 the St. Petersburg metal-workers should have clung to their factory committees and resisted suggestions that they should form a union. On the other hand, the idea of association soon became popular among craftsmen (especially printers), tradesmen, and railwaymen, all of whom enjoyed a more elevated status than the industrial workers. This factor helps to explain why the development of trade unions should have been regarded somewhat askance by doctrinaire Marxists, whereas straightforward radicals, less preoccupied with the mystique of the proletariat, should have lent the movement their ready support.

The political colouring of the trade unions that sprang up at this time varied from one city or region to another. Leaving out of consideration the western provinces, where the unions were often of long standing and recognized the leadership of the Bund, the greatest number of such organizations was to be found in St. Petersburg and Moscow. In the former city most of them were formally speaking non-party, which in practice meant that they followed the Liberation League rather than the Social Democrats. The main personalities involved here were the ex-Economist Prokopovich, who was prominent in the affairs of the League, V. V. Svyatlovsky and V. Grinevich. Only in May did the local Mensheviks come to take an interest in trade-union work.² In

¹ As O. Anweiler justly points out (*Die Rätebewegung in Russland, 1905-1921* (Leiden, 1958), pp. 45ff.), it is artificial to draw a hard-and-fast line between the soviets and the other organizations that were springing up spontaneously at this time. By tradition Bolshevik historians regard the council that met at Ivanovo-Voznesensk between May and July 1905 as the first genuine soviet. (See V. I. Nevsky, *Sovety v 1905 g.* (vol. iii of M. N. Pokrovsky (ed.), *1905: istoriya revolyutsionnogo dvizheniya v otdel'nykh ocherkakh*) (M.-Lg., 1927), pp. 10ff.

² S. I. Somov, p. 175.

Moscow the movement did not begin in earnest until the late summer, but the unions here were more amenable to Social-Democratic control; by September leaders of 16 organizations out of 26 had announced their acceptance of the Party's programme.¹ The most important group were the printers, whose union could trace its origins back to 1903—at least on paper. The Mensheviks took the lead in encouraging these associations, and this led their factional rivals to emulate their example. In the provincial centres the political allegiance of the unions was determined largely by chance factors. At Saratov, for example, the Bolsheviks sponsored a printers' union which openly proclaimed itself an agency of the Party. At Kharkov, on the other hand, the prevailing influence was syndicalist. The leading figure here, A. A. Yevdokimov, was a former Social Democrat who had grown dissatisfied with the Party's reserved attitude towards non-clandestine activity. He devoted himself for some years to the affairs of the Association for Mutual Aid, one of the most important friendly societies in Russia. In 1905 he was given permission by the Ministry of the Interior to arrange a national conference of legal labour organizations. The idea proved popular among trade unionists in Moscow and St. Petersburg, where a Central Bureau was set up to prepare the way. The Social Democrats were somewhat perturbed at these developments, fearing that the trade unions might coalesce under 'bourgeois' or even 'Zubatovite' leadership.²

The ambiguous attitude adopted by the local Party chiefs towards the emergent unions is best exemplified by the early history of the All-Russian Railwaymen's Union (*Vserossiyskiy Zheleznodorozhnyy Soyuz*), as it eventually came to be called. This was undoubtedly the most important labour grouping in the country at this time.³ It was founded towards the end of April at a conference of delegates from ten lines, and within a short time had established a relatively extensive apparatus, with four regional centres (at Warsaw, Vilno, Moscow, and Saratov) and committees on most of the principal networks. Its leaders were for the most part S.R.s and non-party radicals. They placed the demand for democratic freedoms in the forefront of the union's programme and joined Milyukov's League of Unions. The local Social Democrats endeavoured to set up their own organizations among the railwaymen,

¹ Yu. Milonov, *Kak voznikli profsoyuzy v Rossii* (M.-Lg., 1926), p. 102.

² *Pis'ma*, pp. 120-1; Yu. Milonov, pp. 63-67; see below, p. 279.

³ On the history of this union, sadly neglected by Bolshevik writers, see V. Romanov, 'Dvizhenie sredi sluzhashchikh i rabochikh russkikh zheleznikh dorog v 1905 g.', in *Obrazovanie* (1906), nos. 10, 11; (1907), nos. 6, 7; V. N. Perevertsev, 'Vserossiyskiy zheleznodorozhnyy soyuz 1905 g.', in *Byloye* (1925), no. 32, pp. 36-69; and the unpublished paper by W. Sablinsky, 'The All-Russian Railroad Union and the beginning of the general strike in October 1905' (n.p., n.d.).

appealing particularly to the 'proletarian' elements, although there was nothing in the Union's constitution to prevent them from joining the body that already existed. In some areas these tactics proved successful. In Siberia, where the Party had won some support among railwaymen in earlier years, a fairly powerful Social-Democratic union came into being during the first half of 1905.¹ Some other lines in European Russia, particularly in the Ukraine, were also under Party control, while in Moscow, the main stronghold of the Railwaymen's Union, the Social Democrats were influential in some (though not all) depots. But on the whole this campaign cannot be considered a success. The prevailing sentiment among railwaymen of all grades was that they should remain united. Their leaders were pursuing a radical course: in July they decided to call a general strike on the railways at the earliest practicable opportunity. A bold step of this kind seemed likely to lead to results, and appealed to most of the militant elements; paradoxically enough, it was the Party's supporters who, for reasons of their own, urged delay.² In this way the Social Democrats' efforts to ensure their own supremacy conflicted with their endeavours to promote the spread of revolution.

Similar disruptive tactics were applied, although sometimes with less success, to unions and associations formed by printers, teachers, and members of other trades and professions.³ The irony was that these bodies in fact lay wide open to the Party's influence. In many legal and quasi-legal organizations it was sufficient for a group of left-wing enthusiasts to voice their views for these to be endorsed, with reservations, by their 'bourgeois' colleagues. Thus Social-Democratic sympathizers, acting on their own initiative, were able to exert a considerable influence upon the affairs of the Imperial Technological Society in St. Petersburg. This respectable institution also had a branch in Moscow, the Museum for Aid to Labour, which afforded valuable facilities for those engaged in promoting the work of the trade unions. Although the police took reprisals against the Society in St. Petersburg, they did not impede its activities in Moscow. Similarly, the Pedagogical Society in Moscow came to adopt a radical stand under the influence of its newly elected president, the Marxist historian N. A. Rozhkov, who maintained close contact with the local Party

¹ The number of its supporters was said to have risen from 2,500 in January 1905 to 12,000-15,000 in July (*Sibir'skiy s.-dem. listok*, no. 1 (July 1905), pp. 1-4).

² A. Kats and Yu. Milonov, 1905: *professional'noye dvizhenie* (M.-Lg., 1926), pp. 251-9.

³ V. V. Svyatlovsky, *Professional'noye dvizhenie v Rossii* (Spb., 1907, pp. 109-18; *Rabochiy golos* (Spb.), no. 1 (26 November 1905), p. 6; *Voprosy istorii* (1955), no. 2, p. 23.

committee.¹ Russian educated society was permeated by a diffuse revolutionary spirit which gave the Social Democrats ample opportunity to advance their aims—more, indeed, than they knew how to exploit.

Their first efforts in this direction were somewhat clumsy. During the 'banquet campaign' at the end of 1904 several Social-Democratic committees, partly on their own initiative and partly in response to promptings from abroad, dispatched agitators to the meetings with instructions to interrupt the flow of oratory and present the Party's demands; if possible, they were to persuade those present to endorse them. These demonstrative interventions were sometimes successful, but on other occasions they led to disorder and the arrest of the trouble-makers.² Once the liberal movement assumed a more organized form, subtler methods could be employed. But at this stage infiltration was not attempted on any systematic basis. The pressure exerted on liberal organizations from within by Party sympathizers was largely accidental and spasmodic.

Many activists, while accepting the principle that the Social Democrats should make their influence felt in 'bourgeois society', interpreted this task in a narrow fashion: that they should attempt to persuade individual liberal sympathizers to render the Party direct practical assistance. This might take the form of accommodation for clandestine meetings, forwarding addresses for illegal literature, employment of Party members who were living on false passports, and—last but not least—funds. Party agencies sometimes functioned in the most incongruous surroundings. According to Lyadov, in Moscow committee-men often found themselves meeting 'in an unusually wealthy bourgeois setting, and during their sessions were treated to the most unaccustomed delicacies'.³ It was a point of honour among active members of the liberal opposition to provide itinerant 'professional revolutionaries' with a night's hospitality when requested to do so. No questions were asked and no payment expected. One Party member of working-class origin records his surprise when, on arriving one evening at the appointed rendezvous, he was received by the wife of a very senior civil servant. His hostess, it turned out, took a delight in welcoming

¹ *KiS* (1927), no. 32, pp. 162–3.

² Members of the Kharkov Law Society were so shocked by the suggestion that they should send a telegram to the Minister of the Interior calling for a constituent assembly that, in the words of a report to *Iskra*, 'failing to silence our orator, they shamefully tried to flee from the "popular meeting" they had called, so that the workers of Kharkov had to bar the exit and make these "democratic" gentlemen listen to their resolution' (*Iskra*, no. 80 (15 December 1904)). There were also cases of extremists deliberately attempting to break up such meetings by force (M. F. Vladimirovsky, op. cit., p. 119).

³ M. N. Lyadov, *Iz zhizni partii* (M., 1926), p. 92; A. V. Shestakov, in *Put' k oktyabryu*, ed. S. Chernomordik (M., 1923), iii. 10.

such unusual guests, partly for reasons of social prestige: the more 'terrifying' they looked, she confided, the greater her pleasure. Her austere husband reluctantly tolerated her fancies. Throughout the dinner, which was served in style, he sat in silence, afterwards responding to the spirit of the occasion by giving a piano rendering of the *Marseillaise*. Needless to say, his code of chivalry ruled out even the thought of betrayal.¹

Such men and women were worth their weight in gold to the struggling R.S.D.R.P. The material conditions in which the activists lived were extremely arduous. Some of them received a modest salary (approx. 25-30 roubles per month) from Party funds, but this was the exception rather than the rule.² A few had private means. Others subsisted by casual labour, or if very fortunate obtained regular employment that provided them with legal 'cover'. In St. Petersburg there was an insurance company, not inaptly named *Nadezhda* ('Hope'), whose directors made it their policy to employ as clerks men known to be active revolutionaries: they found that, although they seldom remained with the firm for long, owing to the high incidence of arrests, they were exceptionally honest. While working for this company D. Sverchkov was able to establish and manage an illegal press on behalf of the local Party committee.³ The best opportunities for concealment were to be found on the *zemstva*. Early in 1905 V. Sokolov, the Central Committee agent responsible for smuggling *émigré* publications into Russia, took up employment with the Smolensk *zemstvo* as a statistician. His superiors turned a blind eye to his neglect of his official duties and even went so far as to suggest that, if he found it more convenient, he should perform them from abroad.⁴ On one occasion when the Party's principal printing-press at Baku was short of funds, Krasin was able to raise a loan from the local municipality: the accountant was a Party member and the mayor, a gentleman with *narodnik* sympathies, willingly approved the deal as an act of friendship 'from one revolutionary to another'.⁵ At Odessa the committee maintained contact with the director of a large printing works, who 'always helped out in a financial crisis'. He refrained from taking action when it was discovered that some of his men were stealing type to equip an illegal press. His benevolence was ill rewarded: during a strike he was killed by one of his employees.⁶

Finance was still the Party's Achilles heel. Although a certain modest amount was obtained from contributions and the sale of literature, the

¹ A. Shotman, in *PR* (1928), nos. 77-78, pp. 69-70.

² A. V. Shestakov, p. 30.

³ D. Sverchkov, *Na zare revolyutsii* (Lg., 1925), p. 72.

⁴ *PR* (1922), no. 7, p. 193.

⁵ *PR* (1923), no. 14, p. 143.

⁶ E. Levitskaya, in *PR* (1922), no. 6, p. 148.

principal source was the intellectual sympathizer. The most generous benefactors were the industrialist Savva Morozov, who from the end of 1903 onwards supplied Krasin with 2,000 roubles per month, and his friend Maxim Gorky. (The latter was of course rather more than a mere sympathizer.) When Morozov committed suicide in 1905 he left an insurance policy in favour of Gorky's friend M. F. Andreyeva, most of the income from which went to support the Party.¹ It was Gorky who put Krasin in touch with A. D. Tsurupa, the administrator of several landed estates in Ufa province, who supplied funds at regular intervals. In St. Petersburg the Party committee often received large sums from a wealthy doctor specializing in industrial hygiene.² A young girl living in Kharkov, who worked for the local committee as a propagandist, passed on to it 5,000 gold roubles, the proceeds of a bequest which, she said, she 'did not feel justified in using for personal ends'.³ Such idealism was supplemented by the regular collection of smaller sums from people with middle-class backgrounds. For this purpose some committees set up special 'sections for work in society', as they were rather grandly called, consisting mainly of students—or even schoolchildren.

There can be little doubt that without such external aid the Party's work would soon have come to a halt. That it should have been given so freely is not surprising. Russia was in the throes of revolution; liberals and socialists were—nominally, at least—allies in a common cause. What does seem curious is that the Party leaders and activists should have so conspicuously failed to modify their hostility towards the 'bourgeoisie' in the light of practical experience. Ideological prejudice led them to regard all organizations and individuals not under their control as potentially hostile. It was a sectarian view which had no justification in the Russia of 1905. It prevented them from making adequate use of the opportunities that existed for the expansion of their influence, not only among the middle classes but among the urban workers as well. This was the most important sector of the Party's activity, since it could give it a firm position in the political life of the country. Yet the most effective work in this field was done by individuals who often had no formal connexion with the Party at all. To understand the reasons for this curious state of affairs, it is necessary to return from Russia to Western Europe and consider the response which the outbreak of revolution evoked among the *émigrés*. This was a reflection in microcosm of the upheavals in their homeland.

¹ L. B. Krasin, *Gody podpol'ya* (Lg., 1928), pp. 206, 42, 86–88.

² Ibid., pp. 262–3.

³ S. Kramer (ed.), *1905 g. v Khar'kove* (Kharkov, 1925), p. 265; A. S. Shapovalov, p. 251.

VI

IN SEARCH OF A FORMULA

It was paradoxical that, at a time when the rapid march of events in Russia put a high premium on practical revolutionary activity, the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party should have been engrossed in controversies which often bore only indirectly upon the urgent problems of the moment. Their deliberations did of course have a certain influence upon the conduct of the rank and file, but this was much less extensive than is generally assumed. The main significance of the debate lies in its theoretical implications rather than in its immediate effects.

Until the autumn of 1904 the arguments between the leaders revolved almost exclusively around questions of Party organization. The discussion then broadened out to embrace the character of the revolution and the role which the Party was to play in it. So close were the contending points of view that an outside observer, unaware of the strong ideological bias of Russian Marxist thought, might be forgiven for supposing that the dispute was simply the fruit of a misunderstanding. The issues involved were obscured still further by the antagonists' tendency to shift their ground, and even to borrow ideas from one another, while hotly denying that they were doing anything of the kind.

The first sign of a division of opinion over tactical issues came with the outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Japan. In the circumstances it seems rather surprising that the war, which transformed the entire internal situation in Russia and made revolution possible, did not provoke more lively argument among the Party's theorists. They shared the common tendency in opposition circles to treat it as something extraneous to the struggle against the autocracy—a point of view which, it may be noted, has left a lasting imprint upon the approach of historians in Russia to the events of 1905. The Party's line was that the war was due primarily to the autocratic régime, which was pursuing selfish interests opposed to those of the popular masses; that it should be brought to an end by a revolution, led by the proletariat; and that the latter could expect to receive a certain amount of support from the bourgeoisie, since its interests, too, were adversely affected by the perpetuation of the existing order. This general formulation left scope for variations in the degree of emphasis placed upon each of the two concepts, 'peace' and 'revolution', which were rather ill-matched bedfellows. No doubt there were many unsophisticated Party members

who genuinely desired an early end to the war on humanitarian or patriotic grounds, and who took the slogan of peace at its face value; but their views did not often find their way into print. At the other end of the political spectrum were those who saw the war as the product of rivalry between international capitalist interests (rather than the policies of the Russian Government), the implication being that it should be terminated by proletarian action on an international scale.¹ This line of thought, which foreshadowed that adopted by Lenin to such effect during the First World War, did not commend itself to him at this time. Throughout 1904 he almost ignored the whole question. In one of his rare articles on this theme, which appeared shortly after the fall of Port Arthur in December, he argued that the defeat of tsarism at the hands of the 'more progressive' Japanese bourgeoisie would expedite revolution in Russia. But he refrained from suggesting that Russia's defeat was desirable in itself, or that Russian socialists should collaborate with the enemy to bring this about and to internationalize their domestic struggle against the autocracy. He camouflaged his restraint by attacking 'opportunists' in the Party for urging the conclusion of peace at any price, instead of giving pride of place to the cause of revolution.²

This charge exploded harmlessly in the air, at least so far as the Mensheviks were concerned. For if there was one concern that lay uppermost in their minds, it was the danger of a compromise between the absolutist régime and the liberal opposition on the basis of modest constitutional concessions. This, they feared, would prevent the revolution unfolding to its fullest extent, deprive the proletariat of a decisive voice in shaping the new order, and reduce it to a passive instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Indeed, this was the nightmare vision that lurked behind the reasoning of all the Party leaders, irrespective of their factional allegiance. For this reason they refused to join the so-called 'Paris bloc', an alliance formed in October 1904 between the Liberation League, the S.R.s, and the most important national minority organizations.³ The Social Democrats considered that in a coalition of this kind they would forfeit their independence as a 'class' party. They preferred to go their own way and to face a united left-wing front in splendid isolation. Since the Paris bloc never became effective politically, this did not have the serious consequences for the Social Democrats that might have been expected. They were

¹ See Trotsky's criticism of this view in *Iskra*, no. 62 (15 March 1904); also no. 68 (25 June 1904), appx.

² *Lenin*, vii. 44-50, 175-80.

³ *KiS* (1927), no. 32, pp. 57-72; *Leninskiy sbornik*, xv. 45ff.; Yu. O. Martov, *Geschichte der russischen Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin, 1926), p. 74; K. V. Zilliacus, *The Russian revolutionary movement* (L., 1905).

nevertheless alarmed by the success of the radicals in Russia during the late autumn of 1904. This brought to light the inconsistencies in the Party's traditional attitude towards the non-socialist left: committed by doctrine to welcome the liberals as allies, they were impelled by experience to fear them as rivals. The debates that had rent the editorial board of *Iskra* in 1902 now had to be thrashed out in public.

At the second congress this question, which everyone knew to be political dynamite, had not been discussed at length. In the final session two resolutions were passed, which really contradicted each other. One, drafted by Plekhanov, emphasized the need to expose the half-heartedness of the Liberation League. The other, put forward by Potresov, allowed temporary agreements to be concluded with any bourgeois group that affirmed its support for a constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage.¹ The strategic concept underlying this resolution was that it might be possible to split the non-socialist opposition, bringing the radicals under the Party's control and forcing the moderates to move leftwards under a barrage of criticism. *Iskra* adhered to this classic strategy throughout 1904. Meanwhile the liberals, instead of disintegrating, went from strength to strength, until it seemed possible that they might drive the Social Democrats from the political scene altogether.

In this difficult situation Axelrod intervened with a re-statement of basic principles. He recalled his thesis that the labour movement in Russia, if it was to preserve its independence, had to pursue simultaneously a struggle against the autocracy and against capitalism. The natural tendency at the present time was to concentrate on the former task at the expense of the latter, by engaging in anti-régime street demonstrations and similar acts of protest. This was why the liberals were taking over the lead. He argued that the Party ought to seize every opportunity to confront liberal 'society' on its own territory. This would not only drive the moderates to the left but also give the workers valuable experience of independent political action. As Martov put it:

Wherever lots are being cast about the necessities of life of the Russian people, the people themselves, through their vanguard, must make their views known. The forthcoming provincial *zemstvo* assemblies, which will discuss the government's 'new course', should not pass by without being utilized to develop the workers' class consciousness. They must obtain a clear idea of the essence and character of the '*zemstvo* campaign' and intervene as an active force in the more or less peaceful dialogue between the *zemshchina* and the tsarist *oprichnina*.²

¹ *Prot. II*, p. 430.

² *Iskra*, no. 75 (5 October 1904). The text of *Iskra*'s circular letter to the committees, outlining the plan for utilizing the *zemstvo* campaign, will be found in *Lenin*, vii. 410-17.

Unfortunately for the Menshevik strategists the 'class-conscious proletarians' on whom they put their hopes scarcely existed outside their own imagination. The idea of turning the *zemstvo* assemblies to the Party's advantage was not in itself unsound. But the plan put forward by *Iskra* was too contrived, too narrow in scope, and expressed in too nebulous a form for it to succeed. It failed to catch the imagination either of Party activists or of the rank and file. It revealed an unfortunate lack of psychological insight. In this, as in other elaborate plans which the Mensheviks drew up from time to time to guide the committee-men in Russia, they tried to combine a political with an educational purpose: that is to say, they sought to ensure that a certain course of action should not only make a successful impact upon the immediate situation, but that it should also help to make the Party more mature. Axelrod in particular was now beginning to develop something of a guilt complex about the Party's all too evident failure to conform to its public image of itself. He hoped that through successive political 'campaigns' of this nature it could be purged of its excessively intellectual character and be turned into a healthy mass organization on the Western model. Whatever could be said in favour of this from the standpoint of principle, it was not practical politics. It was impossible to lead a revolutionary party in the manner of a scientist seeking to produce a controlled experiment. This over-subtle approach inevitably gave Lenin, who realized the value of simple slogans, an opening which he was quick to exploit.

In a pamphlet published in December 1904 he argued that *Iskra's* plan to utilize the *zemstvo* campaign would lead to results precisely the reverse of those anticipated by its authors, since it would permit the liberals to put forward the Party's demands on its behalf, thereby appearing as spokesmen for the working class. The bourgeoisie, he maintained, respected nothing so much as a display of force; and the best means of influencing its conduct was to summon the workers into the streets and lead them in actions designed to undermine the authority of the Government. There was no cause for concern about their alleged political immaturity. Had they not already demonstrated—most notably at Rostov-on-Don in 1902—their dedication to the revolutionary cause? The essential task that now lay before the Party was a simple one: 'to propagate the idea of insurrection'.¹

This implied a novel conception of the role of the Party, and the workers themselves, in the forthcoming revolution. But Lenin's teaching was clear, flattering to the Party activists' self-esteem, and attuned to the actual situation at that moment. It was soon given emphatic endorsement—or so it seemed—by the relatively poor results attained

¹ *Lenin*, vii. 5-20.

by *Iskra's* campaign in practice, and then by the events of 9 January.

After the shooting in St. Petersburg *Iskra* moved sharply to the left. Both Martov and Lenin concluded that the revolution had begun, and that the next step would be an armed uprising by the indignant workers. Articles appeared in *Iskra*, as well as in Lenin's new paper *Vperyod* ('Forwards'), giving information about the erection of barricades, the location of secret arms dumps, and similar technical details relevant to an insurrection. All the *émigrés* were swept off their feet by a mood of boundless optimism and self-confidence. None of them cared to inquire too closely into the actual sentiments of the men who had marched to the Winter Palace, or who struck work in the weeks that followed 'Bloody Sunday'. Martov sung hymns of praise to the heroic Russian proletariat,

liberator of the fatherland, vanguard of the whole nation, [which] emerges from the January days having added a whole cubit to its political stature. . . . At the moment Social Democracy is becoming the strongest political force, and the working class is willingly accepting its leadership. In the memorable summer of 1903 we had 200,000 men behind us. Now, in this grandiose proletarian uprising, we have a million. . . .¹

The normally cool-headed Plekhanov was just as enthusiastic. It was time, he wrote, for all enemies of the régime to take to their weapons, for 'the question of an armed clash between the working class and the tsarist government has been placed on the agenda by the logic of history'.²

Differences of emphasis remained. The leaders of the two factions tended to exaggerate them, to justify the continuation of their feud, but they were nevertheless significant in their implications. So far as the nature of the insurrection was concerned, there were three principal points of divergence. In the first place, the Mensheviks saw the uprising as the work of large bodies of men, not simply of a well-disciplined minority: 'Without the masses, we are nothing,' wrote Plekhanov. Secondly, they warned against attaching excessive importance to practical arrangements for bringing about an insurrection, since it was neither feasible nor desirable to work out such details in advance.

The task of the Social Democrats is *first* to develop the consciousness of the working class and *then* to arm it. Our technical task is subordinate to the political one. It is not the function of Social Democracy to appoint a rising according to some predetermined plan but to lead the rising once it has started.³

Lastly, they held that an insurrection was only one of several ways in which the revolutionary potential of the masses could be released. It

¹ *Iskra*, no. 85 (27 January 1905).

² Plekhanov, xiii. 190-1.

³ [N. Khomeriki and N. V. Ramishvili], '*Bol'shinstvo*' ili '*men'shinstvo*'? (Geneva, 1905), p. 26.

could also take the more prosaic form of strikes, or the setting up of trade unions and similar quasi-legal bodies. It was important for the Party to foster such activities as well as to prepare for an eventual insurrection, since every breach in the existing legal order should be exploited in order to maximize the Party's impact. Its clandestine operations should be supplemented by a vast increase in its work 'above ground'.

The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, considered that the Social Democrats should concentrate their attention upon those who were actively prepared to carry out an insurrection: how large this element was to be they were not prepared to specify. In the second place they laid much emphasis on centralized planning and direction. A. V. Lunacharsky held that it was necessary to set up 'a general staff of well-trying and experienced leaders in each industrial centre' to lead the rising; Lenin commented that 'this is not Blanquism but the only sensible means of dealing with the approaching storm'.¹ Some of them engaged in speculation as to the date when the insurrection would take place. In his more optimistic moments Lenin seemed to expect it almost daily. One delegate to the Bolshevik congress in April thought it possible 'to time the uprising for the moment when agrarian disturbances reach their peak', and another urged the Party 'to incite the Russian working class to revolt' in protest at Government repression in Transcaucasia.² A third essential plank in the Bolshevik *émigrés*' platform was the view that preparations for an insurrection were opposed, and not complementary, to other less militant pursuits. It was feared that the latter could only fritter away resources of revolutionary energy that ought instead to be carefully husbanded and concentrated on the Party's central task. They were therefore unenthusiastic at the idea of engaging in 'open' activity on a large scale. Lenin's position

¹ *Vperyod*, no. 5 (25 January 1905); see also his speech introducing the debate on this subject at the third congress (*Prot. III*, pp. 98ff.). Both the article and the speech were closely vetted by Lenin, as Lunacharsky makes clear (*PR* (1925), no. 46, p. 54). It was presumably sensitivity to Menshevik charges of 'Blanquism' that led Lenin to use Lunacharsky as his mouthpiece.

² *Prot. III*, pp. 120, 444. Many activists were less enthusiastic about such plans than the *émigrés*. The delegate from Saratov expressly challenged the notion 'that the masses are already armed with ideas, and that we have merely to put guns into their hands', and warned that 'we have still much to do in the way of preparatory agitation' (*ibid.*, pp. 136-7). Others argued that it was beyond the Party's capacity to carry out an insurrection at all and indirectly accused Lenin of being 'too little concerned with the weaknesses of Social Democracy' (pp. 143, 145). A motion giving expression to these doubts was defeated, but the resolution finally adopted made a concession to this point of view by so ordering the three 'immediate tasks' facing the Party that the formation of special 'technical groups' of leaders came last, while first place was given to propaganda (pp. 164, 450).

was rather more flexible than that of many activists.¹ It seems likely that he was influenced to some extent by the arguments of *Iskra*. In any case, he appreciated that, unless the Party took some interest in the affairs of trade unions and similar labour organizations, it could become dangerously isolated from the masses. He secured the adoption by the third congress of a resolution calling on Social Democrats to 'utilize' such bodies, and to turn them wherever possible into strongholds of the Party. But at the same time he emphasized the necessity of preserving, and even developing, the Party's clandestine apparatus.² As late as October 1905 he could write: 'Martov and company are hysterically crying: "Let us go over to open activity as quickly as possible! Any means so long as it is legal!" But it is precisely now that we need to restrain ourselves . . . and to struggle against this miserable semi-legality.'³

It was significant that the Bolshevik congress passed no separate resolution on trade unions, as did the Menshevik conference held at the same time. From some of Lenin's sparse remarks on this subject it seemed as though he regarded unions as agencies invented by the bourgeoisie with the express object of deflecting the workers' attention from more important tasks.⁴ His attitude was at first sight scarcely distinguishable from that of many Bolshevik committee-men—especially those from the Ukraine, where unions were developing outside Party control. The Odessa committee, for example, in September passed a resolution calling on the Party 'to dispel . . . all the illusions associated with trade unions, strongly emphasizing their narrowness by comparison with the final tasks of the labour movement'.⁵ Lenin wrote privately to Gusev, the man responsible for this statement, criticizing him for his inflexibility. He did not, however, feel strongly enough about the matter to devote attention to it in the columns of his own organ—possibly because he did not wish to antagonize his more militant supporters. Characteristically, he chose to speak through the mouth of his aide V. V. Vorovsky (Orlovsky). In July, discussing a 'model statute' put forward by the Saratov committee, according to which trade unions were to be kept under strict Party control, Vorovsky warned against the dangers of insisting on direct affiliation, and suggested that unions should rather 'be attached' (*primykat'sya*) to the Party in a dependent status.⁶ This did little

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 177.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 453.

³ *Lenin*, xxviii. 481.

⁴ *Ibid.*, viii. 113.

⁵ *Ibid.*, viii. 503, and Lenin's reply on pp. 284-7. For the discussion among the Odessa Bolsheviks on this point, see *PR* (1925), no. 47, pp. 23, 60-69. A similar resolution was passed by a 'conference of southern Bolshevik committees' in July (A. Kats and Yu. Milonov, *op. cit.*, 344-5).

⁶ *Proletariy*, no. 11 (27 July 1905).

more than repeat Lenin's earlier ideas on the role of 'formless mass organizations'. Apparently he had not yet arrived at any firm conclusion as to the means whereby the Party was to exercise control over the unions.

Meanwhile the Mensheviks had added their contribution to this debate. The pace was set by the activists rather than the *émigré* theorists: it was a Party worker from Moscow who first urged readers of *Iskra* in plain terms to help establish trade unions by direct action, disregarding legal restrictions.¹ At their conference in April the Mensheviks endorsed this call in a formal resolution, which specified that the Party was to maintain 'continual contact' with such bodies and give them every possible assistance. All workers (as distinct from intellectuals) in the party were instructed to join a union. If a union accepted the Party programme, it was to be represented in the organization.² This directive left much unsaid, but was at least clearer than that provided at this time by their rivals.

In practice, as we have seen, neither group of *émigré* leaders exercised much influence upon the conduct of the local Party chiefs towards the emergent unions. The Menshevik-controlled committees and groups were more active in this field, but members of both factions utilized such opportunities as were available to them in much the same way. Both sought to gain an influence over non-party organizations through the medium of internal pressure groups. The real difference between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks lay not in their actions but in their assumptions. The former took it for granted that these organizations, once they had been won over to Social Democracy, would constitute an organic element in the democratic mass party of the future, with the right to make their voice heard and to influence its decisions. But the Bolsheviks condemned such bodies, even if they accepted the Party's viewpoint, to a permanent second-class status, since effective power would continue to rest with the Party leadership. The same basic difference of approach was reflected in the arguments over the nature of the forthcoming insurrection. The Mensheviks were attempting, rather cautiously and clumsily, to forge a movement embracing all the 'revolutionary masses', in which relations between the constituent parts would be based on mutual trust. The Bolsheviks still saw the masses, even in a period of revolutionary upsurge, as branded with the mark of 'spontaneity': 'consciousness' was the preserve of the *élite*. It was this *élite*—much expanded in size, it is true—that was to

¹ 'Moskal' ', in *Iskra*, no. 90 (3 March 1905).

² *Iskra*, no. 100 (15 May 1905), appx., p. 20. See S. M. Schwarz's unpublished paper, 'Bol'shevizm i men'shevizm v ikh otnosheniyakh k massovomu rabochemu dvizheniyu', ch. IV, pp. 11ff.

lead the masses in the insurrection, and this *élite* that was to control them once victory had been won.

If it was hard for the leaders of Russian Social Democracy to decide on the tactics that would bring them most success in the current revolutionary situation, it was still more difficult to reconcile these tactics with the basic strategic concepts to which they were committed, and which it was impossible for them to renounce without bringing their entire dogma into question. It was around this dilemma that their controversy largely revolved.

It had always been an article of faith that the forthcoming revolution would only be 'bourgeois-democratic', and not proletarian, even though the proletariat was to play a leading part in it. But the very term 'bourgeois' was of dubious practical use in the Russia of 1905. It could be given several shades of meaning, in accordance with the particular social group to which the label was affixed: to the urban middle class (including liberal landowners from the *zemstva* as well as business and professional men) or the wealthier elements among the peasants, artisans, and so on—usually referred to by Russian Marxists as 'petty bourgeois'. In 1905 the leaders of the two factions came to apply the word 'bourgeois' in different senses: whereas the Mensheviks had in mind the urban middle class, the Bolsheviks directed their attention towards the peasants. The former sought to remain loyal to traditional doctrine, while their rivals were less rigid.

Curiously enough, the opening shot in the debate was fired, not by Lenin, but by a man who stood on the fringe of the Party—Parvus (A. L. Helphand). Though of Russian-Jewish origin, Parvus had made his career in the German socialist movement, and had an international reputation among Marxists as an authority on political and economic questions. Towards the Russian Social Democrats he adopted a somewhat avuncular manner, affectionate but a little patronizing. 'I speak with the voice of European Social Democracy,' he asserted on one occasion, when admonishing them for their narrow dogmatism.¹ It was to Parvus that Trotsky went after his breach with *Iskra* in the spring of 1904, and from him that he received an intellectual stimulus that was to leave a permanent imprint upon his thinking. The relationship, as Trotsky's biographer points out, was not wholly one-sided: it was a partnership between two men whose tastes and characters were in some ways similar.

For Parvus the tsarist régime was primarily a symbol of 'international reaction', an implacable enemy of freedom and progress in all countries.

¹ A. N. Potresov and B. I. Nikolaevsky, op. cit., p. 158. On Parvus, see I. Deutscher, *The prophet armed* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 99ff.

He was one of the first Marxists to appreciate the wider implications of the Russo-Japanese war, as the harbinger of major shifts in the balance of power between nations and social classes. He realized that a revolution in Russia could not fail to have important international consequences. When news came of the shooting in St. Petersburg on 9 January, he welcomed it as a sign that his prophecies were reaching fulfilment. In the Russian revolution that had now begun, he argued, the role of the working class would be much greater than it had been in the European revolutions of 1848. Russian liberalism had no real roots in society, and the task of leading the revolution therefore devolved upon the urban proletariat. It could hope to command a certain amount of support from the peasants; however, the latter would not play any independent role. 'They are capable only of increasing the political anarchy in the country, and so weakening the government, [but] they cannot constitute a compact revolutionary army.'¹ Trotsky wholeheartedly endorsed these sentiments. 'There is no one else but us on the battlefield of revolution,' he declared in the columns of *Iskra* (to which he now briefly returned as a contributor).² Such ideas were not unfamiliar to Russian Marxists, but seldom before had they been expressed in such a categorical form.

What did this mean in terms of practical politics? Parvus did not shrink from the implications of his theory. In January 1905 he published a pamphlet that bore the title *No Tsar, but a Workers' Government!* If the workers alone were capable of overthrowing the autocracy, his argument ran, then it was logical for them to take the next step as well. As Trotsky put it: 'The composition of the provisional government will depend mainly on the proletariat—or, to be more precise, when the uprising is completely successful power will pass to those who have led the proletariat'—in other words, to representatives of the Party.³ This, of course, was wholly at variance with existing teaching and raised questions of the utmost gravity. Everyone agreed that Russia was not yet ripe for socialism, and Parvus and Trotsky themselves were careful at this stage to avoid mentioning the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. But how could a government controlled by the Social-Democratic Party avoid carrying out socialist measures, if it were not to discredit itself in the eyes of its supporters? Would not its ministers find themselves in the unenviable position of the French socialist leader E. A. Millerand, an object of condemnation among orthodox Marxists because he had accepted office in a 'bourgeois' government?

¹ Parvus [A. Helphand], *Rossiia i revoliutsiia* (Spb., 1906), pp. 141–2.

² *Iskra*, no. 93 (17 March 1905); cf. his brochure *Do 9-go yanvarya*, in *Sochineniia* (M.-Lg., 1924), ii, (i), to which Parvus contributed a preface.

³ L. D. Trotsky, loc. cit.

They would be faced with the dilemma: either to betray their ideals on the plea that they were politically unrealistic, or else proceed with socialist measures that would inevitably bring about their own defeat. To this argument the protagonists of the theory had as yet no real reply. Parvus remarked vaguely: 'A Social-Democratic provisional government cannot carry out a socialist revolution in Russia, but the very process of liquidating absolutism will give it fruitful soil for political activity.'¹ If this meant anything at all, it was that once the Party found itself in power it would go as far as it dared towards realizing its ultimate objectives, without taking too much thought about the possible consequences. This was a romantic view of revolution. There was something to be said for it on psychological grounds: a certain recklessness and fanatical self-assurance were essential to a revolutionary if he were to have any hope of success. But Parvus and Trotsky were denied the use of such arguments. They could only invoke the authority of Marx: the essence of his teaching, Parvus declared, was 'to make the maximum amount of political changes in the direction of social revolution that existing political forces render possible at any given historical moment'.²

These ideas had a considerable impact in the *émigré* world, and not least upon Lenin. As on so many other occasions in his career, the Bolshevik leader was torn between his emotions and his reason. The boldness for which Trotsky called touched a chord in his heart, but at the same time he was reluctant to make such a radical departure from accepted doctrine. While sharing to the full Trotsky's appreciation of the revolutionary role of the proletariat, he was anxious to use every opportunity to maximize its influence upon other social groups. Not that he expected much support to be forthcoming from the urban middle classes: here his views had hardened as a result of the polemic with *Iskra* over the *zemstvo* campaign. Every real or imagined accession of strength to the liberals aroused him to furious denunciations: indeed, this now became the *leitmotif* of his writings. He ended by working himself almost into a psychosis, in which liberalism, and in particular the radical Liberation League, seemed the main enemy that the working class and its Party had to face. The constant refrain of his articles in *Vperyod* was that 'the Russian bourgeoisie does not want to overthrow the existing order, to replace the monarchy by a republic; like the German bourgeoisie in 1848, it stands for a reconciliation between the people and the throne'.³ To take this view in the early months of 1905

¹ Parvus, loc. cit.

² A. N. Potresov and B. I. Nikolaevsky, p. 154.

³ *Lenin*, vii. 344. Some Bolsheviks thought his passionate hostility to the liberals unreasonable. M. N. Pokrovsky, the historian, warned his Party comrades that they were 'creating a mythical form in their imagination which harms us more than the Liberationists themselves' (ibid., viii. 487).

was to misread much of the evidence relating to the actual trends within the non-socialist left. A certain amount of humbug was involved as well. For example, when Prince Trubetskoy's deputation was received by the Tsar, Lenin wrote an article entitled 'The First Steps of Bourgeois Treachery', in which he called on the liberals to address themselves, not to the autocrat, but to the people. When the next *zemstvo* congress proceeded to do precisely this, he remarked indignantly that the liberals were following in the wake of the revolution 'like hagglers and brokers, who flit from one side to the other', and maintained that they were 'still anxious to make a deal with absolutism'.¹ In his view there could be no distinction between the 'good' and 'bad' liberal. This had all along been a point of controversy between him and Plekhanov: now it was dragged into the limelight. It became the principal theme of his pamphlet *The Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution*, published in June. 'The intellectual [i.e. Menshevik] wing of the Party measures off the good kind bourgeois, with whom we ought to make agreements. The proletarian [i.e. Bolshevik] wing does not expect any kindness from the bourgeoisie, but supports every bourgeois, even the worst, in so far as he actually fights tsarism.'² This sounded much like his line in *Iskra* a few years earlier, but from the nuances it was apparent that he had moved to the left. What this 'support' implied was revealed by the resolution passed on this question at the third congress, which called on the Party 'to explain to the workers the anti-revolutionary and anti-proletarian character of the bourgeois-democratic tendency in all its gradations, starting with the moderate liberal variety . . . and finishing with the . . . Liberation League and the various professional associations.'³ Potresov's resolution of 1903, providing for limited agreements with the radicals under certain conditions, was now formally annulled.

Where then were the workers to look for support? Lenin's answer to this query was: to the peasants, the wealthier elements among them not excluded. During the first half of 1905 he developed the idea he had first expressed in 1901, to the effect that the antagonism between the peasants, taken collectively, and the landowners was greater than that between the classes into which the peasantry was supposedly divided.⁴ At the present moment, he argued, even the so-called *kulaks* were more interested in seizing the gentry's estates than in upholding the principle of private property. He now extolled the peasantry with as much fervour as he denounced the urban middle class. Whereas the latter was 'inconsequential and egoistic', the peasants were 'the most radical supporters of the democratic revolution', 'a bulwark of the revolution and

¹ *Lenin*, vii. 352; viii. 129-33.

² *Ibid.*, vii. 63.

³ *Prot. III*, p. 456.

⁴ See above, p. 80.

the republic'. The war was said to have undermined their faith in the Tsar, and they were now 'absolutely democratic', or at least—here he unobtrusively corrected himself—'[their] ideal will be a democratic revolution as soon as they begin to free themselves of their naïve monarchism'. The eulogy ended: 'the bourgeoisie is *incapable* of carrying out the democratic revolution to the full, whereas the peasantry is *capable* of doing so. We should therefore help it with all our might and main to attain this end.'¹ In practical terms, the Party was to assist the peasants in establishing village committees to expropriate estates and take other measures that would undermine the régime and also intimidate the urban middle class.

Lenin's discovery, or re-discovery, of the revolutionary potentialities of the *muzhik* was a landmark in the development of Marxist thought in Russia, the deeper implications of which will be discussed presently. Here it is sufficient to note that the new line did not imply any modification of the Party's 'proletarian' bias in the direction of greater concern for peasant interests—rather the reverse. The move was purely tactical in character: the energy released by the agrarian unrest was to be channelled in such a way as to ensure maximum development of the revolution. Lenin simply fitted the peasants into the place in his strategic scheme that had hitherto been occupied by 'the bourgeoisie' *tout court*.² It was, so to speak, an act of intellectual book-keeping. He reached his conclusions as the result of theoretical speculation rather than analysis of the actual state of social relationships in Russia. Indeed, he was honest enough to acknowledge that the idea had come to him in the course of his literary debate with the Mensheviks; and this aroused misgivings among some of his followers, who believed that the Party's tactics should be the product of its collective experience, not its leader's cerebrations. The Saratov committee, which was more active among the peasants than most, rejected the new line unanimously.³ At the third congress opposition centred on two points. Some delegates, of whom Lunacharsky was one, were sceptical of the peasants' supposedly whole-hearted commitment to democracy. 'We must also fight

¹ *Lenin*, viii. 94-96.

² Martynov remarked rather acidly: 'the middle classes have escaped from the "hegemony" of the Social-Democratic intellectuals, who have thereupon cried "sour grapes!" But this does not worry our "man with a plan", who has soon found his feet again. He has thought up a new "hegemony", this time over the peasantry, and labelled it "the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry"' (*Peredovye i otstalye* (Geneva, 1905), p. 15). Krupskaya records that Lenin finally became converted to the view that the peasants should be supported in their attempts to expropriate private estates after his conversations with Gapon and Matyushenko, the rebel leader from the *Potemkin* (*Vospominaniya o Lenine* (M., 1932), p. 90).

³ *Lenin*, viii. 181.

against a Pugachovshchina,' he warned; 'there have already been cases of "generals" appearing, wearing various uniforms.' Lenin interjected sharply: 'Don't believe such stories!' As a sop to this traditionalist viewpoint the relevant resolution included an admission that the peasants were 'lacking in political consciousness'.¹ Others feared that the Party might become too closely identified with the peasants' aspirations for private ownership, since in practice it would not be possible, as Lenin thought, to draw a distinction between the 'democratic' (i.e. destructive) aspect of the agrarian movement and those aspects which, as Marxists, they found objectionable. These critics failed to grasp the full import of Lenin's approach, based as it was upon a belief that the wealthier peasants could for a time be deluded as to the Party's true aims. The congress, by a considerable majority, backed Lenin, and so committed the Party to support the peasants in their revolutionary acts 'right up to the expropriation of estates'.

This resolution remained largely on paper. Neither before nor after the third congress did the Bolsheviks exercise any notable influence over the peasants. Yet it was on the optimistic assumption that they could rapidly obtain a large following in the villages that Lenin based his very precise ideas as to the probable course of events, and the action that he insisted should be taken to make his prognosis come true. The revolution, he now asserted, could develop in either of two ways: as a compromise between the Tsar and the liberals, or as a victory for 'the masses' in town and country. (No convincing explanation was offered why a third way was impossible.) It was the Party's task to ensure that the insurrection led to the establishment of a provisional revolutionary Government capable of eliminating the last vestiges of the old régime, introducing essential democratic reforms, and organizing the elections to the constituent assembly. On this point Lenin was absolutely firm. Any other means of bringing such an assembly into being—e.g. through pressure from outside on some body with more limited powers—he condemned out of hand, as synonymous with 'reaction'. It does not need much imagination to see that his own plan could scarcely be relied on to produce a genuinely representative assembly. The term 'essential democratic reforms' was conveniently vague. Sometimes he left his readers with the impression that, once the provisional Government had completed its task, it would gracefully resign and hand over power to the new constitutional authorities. But nowhere was this stated explicitly; and it is quite clear from the general tenor of his writings in 1905 that he had no intention of allowing events to take such a course. He regarded the provisional Government as a bridgehead in the bourgeois order, which it was the Party's duty to expand as far as conditions permitted.

¹ *Prot. III*, pp. 244, 454.

In Marxist terms the provisional régime was to be what Lenin called 'a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'—not a 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. This verbal subtlety involved a point of principle. In conformity with accepted doctrine he insisted that the latter type of régime could only be the product of the ultimate socialist revolution. He condemned as 'semi-anarchistic' the notion that it was already feasible to conquer power with this end in view.

The level of economic development in Russia (the objective prerequisite) and the level of consciousness and organization of the broad mass of the proletariat (the subjective prerequisite, which is intimately connected with the objective one) render the immediate full liberation of the working class impossible. Only the most ignorant people can ignore the bourgeois character of the democratic revolution now in progress. . . .¹

It was therefore unreasonable to expect, as Trotsky did, that the Social-Democratic Party could command a majority in the provisional Government.

A revolutionary dictatorship can only be stable when it rests upon the support of the overwhelming majority of the people. However, in Russia at the moment the working class is only a minority of the population. . . . The social basis of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship that is possible and desirable will of course be reflected in the composition of the provisional government. Inevitably, the most variegated representatives of revolutionary democracy will participate, and even predominate, in it.²

The Social-Democratic ministers, he implied, would exercise restraint in refusing to carry out socialist measures that would disrupt the Government's unity. If pressed by their supporters to undertake such action, 'we shall reply by pointing out that socialism is still alien to the mass of the people, who are democratically inclined, that class contradictions are still insufficiently developed, and that the proletariat is still deficient in organization.'³

But was such restraint likely or possible in practice? This was another example of the predilection among Russian Marxists for artificial and rationalistic intellectual constructions, by means of which they endeavoured to reconcile the incompatible. Lenin's arguments gave expression only to one side of his nature, and one can detect in them an undertone of reluctant and dutiful conformity to precepts with which he was emotionally out of sympathy. Elsewhere in his writings he allowed his revolutionary instinct full rein. On one occasion, discussing the fate of the lands expropriated by the peasant committees, he began by saying that this question would be decided in the course of a social struggle between the richer and poorer peasants—which under a 'bourgeois' régime, so the reasoning went, could only result in a

¹ *Lenin*, viii. 40.

² *Ibid.*, vii. 194.

³ *Ibid.*, viii. 41.

victory for the former. But he then went on to suggest that, in areas where capitalism was already highly developed, these estates should be handed over to farm-labourers' organizations, 'since we shall immediately begin to go over from the democratic to the socialist revolution (according to the measure of our strength). . . . We are for permanent revolution. We shall not stop half-way.'¹ This contrasted sharply with his earlier remarks to the effect that Russia was not yet ripe for socialism.

In his plans for expanding the bridgehead a key role was played by the international repercussions that he expected to ensue from a successful 'democratic' revolution in Russia.

What great perspectives will be opened up before the European working class by such a victory! [he exclaimed]. The flame of our revolution will set light to Europe; . . . then the revolutionary upheaval in Europe will in turn have an effect upon Russia, and years of revolution will be prolonged into decades.

With the help of the socialist workers of Europe we shall be able, not only to defend our democratic republic, but also to go on to socialism with seven-league strides.²

Indeed, he made it plain that one of the prime functions of the provisional Government should be to spread revolution to other lands, thereby creating the conditions in which the Party's final objectives could be brought within reach. In this way the advanced countries of the West were to compensate for Russia's own social and political immaturity.

A grandiose and stimulating vision, certainly—but was it anything more? In the early months of 1905, when these ideas were taking shape in Lenin's mind, his active supporters were numbered in dozens rather than thousands. The Party was rent by schism and dissent; it was only beginning to exercise any significant degree of influence upon the urban workers, and still had virtually none upon the peasants. Revolution was far off even in Russia, let alone in other countries. In fact Lenin's broad historical perspective was little more than a projection of his own limitless ambition. It was not based upon a sober appraisal of the facts in regard to the Russian peasantry or 'the socialist workers of Europe', the two elements that were allotted key roles in his scheme. And yet, paradoxically, his vision did have a certain substance: in some respects it was better attuned to the Russia of 1905 than the equally abstract and irrational, but more conservative, theorems of the Mensheviks.

It is harder to gain a clear picture of their views than of those of the Bolsheviks, since they spoke with discordant voices. On the right stood

¹ *Lenin*, viii. 186. This statement later served Bolshevik historians as evidence that already in 1905 Lenin had developed the so-called theory of the 'growing over' (*pererastanie*) of the bourgeois-democratic into the socialist revolution. It was in fact only a casual remark, which he did not develop further.

² *Ibid.*, viii. 83; vii. 365, 298.

the 'old guard': Plekhanov and Axelrod, together with Potresov, Martynov, and others. They had now more or less abandoned the concept of proletarian 'hegemony'—at least in its cruder form.¹ They were impressed by the strength of the liberals, and urged the necessity for socialists to collaborate with them, while preserving their independence, in the interests of the common struggle. Plekhanov put forward the slogan: 'March apart, but strike together!'² It was sound doctrine, but it had little success. Official Menshevik policy was formulated by Martov and Dan, as effective editors of *Iskra*. They clung to the idea that the proletariat should use its great strength to drive the urban middle classes to the left, so forcing them to fulfil that function in the revolution which Marxist theory prescribed for them. Martov was more antagonistic to the liberals than Plekhanov, but less so than Lenin. He argued that in the so-called bourgeois revolution a far from inconsiderable role would be played by the bourgeoisie. Lenin, of course, did not dispute this: he merely identified the bourgeoisie with the peasantry.

This was a step Martov refused to take. He held that it was a crude simplification to draw a sharp dividing-line between different bourgeois groups on formal grounds; the proletariat should continue to seek support from any quarter. Secondly, while agreeing that the peasants were a revolutionary force, he pointed out that their movement also had undemocratic features, and was sceptical about the Party's present capacity to win widespread support in the countryside. The Mensheviks endorsed the demand for peasant land committees, but without much enthusiasm.³ Thirdly, while the liberals might admittedly be

¹ See above, p. 76, and A. N. Potresov, *Iskra*, no. 78 (20 November 1904), who discusses the evolution of the 'hegemony' concept. In November 1905 Plekhanov, apparently oblivious of the fact that he had been one of the first to advance the idea, implied that it was absurd: 'Recently I was asked: "who should follow whom, the bourgeoisie the proletariat, or vice versa?" The man who made this remark showed that he had not the faintest idea about scientific socialism. If we were to say to the proletariat: "follow the bourgeoisie", we should be signing the death warrant of Social Democracy. . . . If we were to say to the bourgeoisie: "follow the proletariat", we would be a voice crying in the wilderness. . . . The bourgeoisie *cannot* follow the proletariat without signing its own death warrant, which it naturally has not and cannot have the slightest wish to do' (*Plekhanov*, xiii. 346).

² *Ibid.*, xiii. 194.

³ *Iskra*, no. 100 (15 May 1905), appx., p. 22. They were conceived primarily as administrative bodies, to distribute the land in an orderly fashion once it had been expropriated, rather than as militant organizations to effect the seizure. In practice Menshevik agitation in the villages was conducted in terms indistinguishable from those of the Bolsheviks (cf., for example, Martov's pamphlet *S kem idti krest'yanam?* (Geneva, 1905)). In neither case, as we have seen, was such activity very important—except in Georgia, where special conditions prevailed.

opportunistic, Martov considered that they were by no means reactionary. He put his trust in 'the spontaneous force of the bourgeois revolution, [which] fortunately is bolder and more resolute than the class whose direct political rule it is preparing'. As the liberals moved to the left, they would 'pull up the roots that had hitherto nourished them', so falling under the Party's sway. He looked forward to the appearance of a strong party of 'Russian Jacobins' that would derive support from the peasants as well as from the urban middle class and would be well equipped to assume the burdens of government once the autocracy had been overthrown.¹

As to the method whereby such a transfer of power should take place, the Mensheviks did not regard this as a question of principle. They hoped for insurrection, and the formation of a provisional Government from below; but they also recognized that events might take a less violent course. The Party should not tie its hands in advance. However the provisional Government came to be formed, it would be composed of representatives of the bourgeoisie. The Social Democrats should not seek to participate in it, for they could not assume responsibility for the construction of the new bourgeois order: their task would be to defend the interests of labour against the power of capital. When the new régime was formed, they should constitute themselves 'the party of extreme revolutionary opposition'.

This formula was endorsed in a resolution passed by the Menshevik conference in April 1905, which then stated inconsistently that these tactics did not preclude 'a partial episodic capture of power, and the formation of revolutionary communes in this or that town or region, exclusively to help spread the rising and disorganize the government'. Furthermore, in one eventuality it would be permissible for the Party to assume power, and seek to hold it for as long as it could:

If the revolution were to leap over into the advanced countries of Western Europe, where conditions have already attained a certain maturity for the realization of socialism . . . the narrow limits of the Russian revolution could be substantially widened, and it would be possible to embark upon the path of a socialist transformation.²

Thus official Menshevik doctrine also made major concessions to the extremist line of Parvus and Trotsky. The difference was one of temperament. Trotsky looked forward to 'permanent revolution' with keen anticipation. Lenin followed him with mingled hopes and anxieties. Martov followed in a mood of despondent resignation. If the radical parties, he wrote in *Iskra*,

¹ *Iskra*, no. 105 (15 July 1905); cf. also editorials in nos. 84, 91-93, and 103.

² *Iskra*, no. 100 (15 May 1905), appx., p. 24.

should fade away before they have had time to blossom, . . . the proletariat will not be able to refuse political power. But it is also clear that . . . it will be unable to restrict itself to the limits of a bourgeois revolution. . . . It cannot help but strive for a *Revolution in Permanenz*, for a direct struggle with the whole of bourgeois society. In concrete terms this either means another Paris Commune or the beginning of a socialist revolution in the West which will spread to Russia. We are obliged to aim for the latter. . . . If it were really *essential* for the triumph of the democratic republic and the revolution that the socialists should take the helm of the ship of state, then [they] would have to sacrifice their political independence and exclaim, in the words of the Mountain: '*périssent notre nom pourvu que la liberté soit sauvée*'.¹

Thus Martov's whole scheme stood or fell upon the existence of a radical bourgeois party capable of taking charge of the country after the collapse of tsarism; only if such a party failed to materialize was he prepared, *contre-cœur*, to assume the burdens of office. The emergence of the Constitutional-Democratic Party (Kadets, K.D.s) later in 1905 showed that his strategic concept was in this respect closer to reality than that of either Lenin or Trotsky. But this did not bring him the enhanced prestige one might have expected: for in the R.S.D.R.P. success went, not to those leaders whose policies were proved correct by events, but to those who could present to the Party an acceptable image of themselves. And here Martov could not compete with Lenin or Trotsky. He appeared to lack self-confidence and the will to win. His irresolution gave Lenin a further opportunity to discredit him: it was interpreted as cowardice, or treachery, or hidden sympathy for the class enemy. What was the difference, Lenin asked, between attempting to seize power in a single city or region, which the Mensheviks were ready to tolerate, and in the State as a whole, which they were not? "Treachery" does not cease to be "treachery" just because it is "partial", "episodic" and so on.² The Mensheviks, he claimed, had been forced to recognize the truth of his ideas, but were unwilling and unable to carry them out whole-heartedly: the choice was one between consistency and inconsistency, between actively shaping events and passively trailing behind them.

There was an element of truth in Lenin's charge, but the corollary was that he was unjustified in denouncing Martov as 'opportunist'. For if the term had any meaning other than as an abusive epithet, all the Social-Democratic leaders were guilty of this sin—except the 'old guard', who continued to adhere to ancient ways of thought. If Martov hesitated to follow Lenin, Lenin also hesitated to follow Trotsky. The essence of their disagreement was the extent to which they were each

¹ *Iskra*, no. 93 (17 March 1905).

² *Lenin*, viii. 80.

prepared to impose their own will upon events. Martov remained a determinist at heart. He believed that, if the Party transgressed the laws of social development, history would punish it for its audacity. Instinctively he sought to align his will with the 'class will' of the proletariat, to identify himself with an irresistible impersonal force. So, too, did Trotsky—but he saw the masses as infused with limitless energy, that had only to be sufficiently stimulated for miracles to be attained. Lenin combined passion with sober calculation. He was eager to accelerate the march of history, and brought his intellect to bear on the problems of creating the situation that would afford him and his followers a maximum of power. He had now taken his political philosophy one stage further. He had already developed the theory of the centralized vanguard party, dictating its will to the proletariat and acting in its name. He now adumbrated the theory of a proletarian-peasant 'alliance' effectively dominated by the urban partner. These two dictatorships could be superimposed upon one another. The final vision before his eyes, still imperfectly formulated, was of the Party, led by himself, exercising supreme authority over the entire nation on the morrow of a successful seizure of power. That he still envisaged this transformation as 'democratic', and even as 'bourgeois', was supremely irrelevant.

It is arguable whether the ideological debate had any very significant influence upon the outcome of the struggle for power between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, which continued throughout 1905 with unabated ferocity. It was fought largely by 'administrative' means which those familiar with the Party's earlier history had by now come to take almost for granted.

In July 1904 Lenin's prestige seemed to have suffered an irreparable blow: his leadership and views had been repudiated, not only by all his former colleagues on the editorial board of *Iskra*, but also by most members of the Central Committee, none of whom were Mensheviks. Yet within a year Lenin had regained control of the Bolshevik faction and had built it into a potent political force. It was now the Menshevik leaders' turn to find themselves isolated and humiliated—although their popular following, so far as can be judged, was greater than that of their rivals. This remarkable swing of the pendulum was partly the result of the general situation in Russia: revolution was in the air, and ardent enemies of the régime naturally tended to look for leadership to those who claimed to be more aggressive than anyone else. But this explanation is not really very helpful. The decisive factor, it seems, was Lenin's fanatical determination to recoup his political fortunes. Adversity only served to make him more resolute, more convinced

than ever of the correctness of his ideas. At first, it is true, he was shocked into virtual inactivity. However, after a few weeks he coolly and methodically set about recovering his position. He launched a new propaganda campaign, in which he denounced the 'conciliators' (as he called those who upheld the C.C.'s policy) with the same fervour that he had hitherto reserved for the Mensheviks. He depicted himself and his followers as the innocent victims of a conspiracy hatched by 'opportunists' and other traitors, allegedly motivated by the basest impulses. 'All the central Party institutions have turned into a secret organization of struggle against the Party,' he declared.¹ Whether he believed this charge himself it is difficult to say. To any unprejudiced observer it was as plain as could be that the July declaration was no more than a belated response to the agitation which Lenin had carried on since November 1903. Moreover, it left the way open for a perfectly fair and reasonable solution of the conflict: he had only to rejoin *Iskra*, and he could have had a platform from which to advance his own point of view. There would then have been no need for him to resort to manœuvre. But to such a humiliating course Lenin was irrevocably opposed. Apparently he reasoned that, after all that had passed between them, his chances of once again imposing his will upon his fellow-editors would be negligible; he would be merely one of a team, with no prospect of becoming the Party's acknowledged leader. He therefore put from his mind all thought of compromise and redoubled his efforts to bring about a 'revolution from below'. His aim now was to mobilize such extensive support in the local committees that the 'conciliators' would be obliged to yield, and to call a third Party congress which would restore 'unity'—on his own terms.

Lenin's opponents had not expected him to adopt such a recalcitrant attitude, and were nonplussed. Though annoyed at the baseless charges he hurled against them, they were unable to rebut them effectively. Their sincere desire for peace and unity inhibited them from unleashing an equally vigorous propaganda counter-offensive. Rather vaguely they hoped that their professions of good faith would be accepted at their face value and reciprocated in a genuine spirit of compromise. They felt obliged to respect the general state of opinion in the Party. Most people were unconcerned with the rights and wrongs of the dispute, and simply wanted it to be terminated as soon as possible, so that attention might be directed to more important things. Lenin knew how to turn this mood to his own advantage. He reckoned that, although he would at first be criticized for intransigence, in the long run firmness would pay good dividends. As a born revolutionary, he was careful to present his actions as defensive rather than offensive. He maintained that he

¹ *Leninskiy sbornik*, xv. 230.

was not seeking to subvert the established Party authorities, but only to express the righteous indignation felt by the majority of members (whom he assumed were on his side) at those who had 'usurped' control. This involved him and his aides in a series of elaborate fictions, since they had to invoke the support of spurious bodies that represented scarcely anyone but their creators.

The campaign against the C.C. was launched in September 1904 at a conference in Geneva attended by Lenin and a few intimate friends, known to Bolshevik historians as 'the meeting of the 22'. This was in some ways a rather bogus gathering, which failed to rally even the handful of Bolshevik *émigrés* in the city.¹ Those present adopted an appeal which in effect invited all Party committees and groups to disobey the injunctions of the C.C. and agitate openly for the immediate convocation of a new congress. Simultaneously steps were taken to co-ordinate their work by setting up a body which eventually came to be called the 'Bureau of the Committees of the Majority' and acted as a shadow C.C. Meanwhile in Geneva steps were taken to supplement the rather unprepossessing series of pamphlets published on Lenin's behalf by Vorovsky and Bogdanov with a newspaper, which it was hoped would undermine the position of *Iskra*. As Lyadov, one of Lenin's chief aides, explained in a letter to two agents at home: 'We are not to leave the Party, but to fight for all our worth. . . . We have to conquer Russia [i.e. the committees] despite the central [Party] institutions, and we shall do this in the same way as *Iskra* once did. We have to repeat the work of *Iskra* and bring it to completion.'² The new organ appeared at the end of December under the title of *Vperyod* ('Forwards'). The guiding spirit behind the enterprise was V. D. Bonch-Bruевич, a man whose expertise, curiously enough, lay in the field of dissident Russian religious sects. His new publishing venture could hardly have been more orthodox from Lenin's point of view. *Vperyod* was simply his personal mouthpiece. It considerably enhanced his standing in the Party. No one appeared to think it unduly odd that these two tiny groups of *émigrés* in Geneva should each produce their own newspaper and consign it independently to Russia, at a cost in money and effort

¹ For lists of those present, see *Leninskiy sbornik* xv. 109 and N. Valentinov, *Vstrechi s Leninyim* (N.Y., 1953), p. 324. Actually only nineteen persons were present, including the wives of the Bolshevik leaders. This ruse made the meeting appear numerically more respectable (for the names of the participants were of course kept secret). When a vote was taken in the Bolshevik colony in Geneva, only 30 out of 46 were prepared to follow Lenin (N. Shakhov, *Bor'ba za s'yezd* (Geneva, 1904), p. 103). The meeting was publicly stated to have taken place in August. According to Lyadov (*Iz zhizni partii*, p. 56), this was 'for conspiratorial reasons', but more probably it was designed to give the semblance of a spontaneous protest against the 'July declaration'.

² *Leninskiy sbornik*, xv. 138-9.

totally disproportionate to the size of the party they both claimed to serve.¹

The main function of the members of the Bureau was to press local committees to endorse the stand taken at 'the meeting of the 22'. To this end they arranged conferences, on a regional basis, of groups known to be sympathetic to Lenin. The first such conference, in September, was attended by Bolshevik elements from Odessa, Nikolayev, and Yekaterinoslav, as well as the nominally defunct 'Southern Regional Bureau'. It dutifully requested 'the 22' to nominate an Organization Committee to call the congress—a deliberate piece of make-believe, since they were well aware that the Bureau was already in existence for this very purpose.² Two months later another conference was held, this time of Transcaucasian Bolsheviks. Unexpectedly for the organizers, those present insisted that they should have a voice in determining the composition of this Bureau, and that it should collaborate as far as possible with the Central Committee.³ They clearly wished the congress to be more than an instrument for Lenin's personal aggrandizement.

This attitude reflected the realities of the situation in the Transcaucasian Party organizations, where the Bolsheviks were now very much on the defensive. In the autumn of 1903 the leaders of the Caucasian Union had ordered the suspension of the Georgian-language newspaper *Brdzola Proletariata* ('Proletarian Struggle') and demanded sanctions against A. Topuridze, a delegate to the second Party congress who had wavered in his support for Lenin. This line aroused strong opposition from Zhordaniya and other Georgian Social-Democratic leaders, who were proud of the relatively strong organization they had built up and had no wish to see their following dwindle through the pursuit of narrow sectarian policies. They accordingly threw their weight behind the Mensheviks. Thereupon they found themselves denounced by the Armenian leader A. Zurabov for their 'opportunist' tendencies. The factional dispute in Transcaucasia was thus complicated by national animosities.⁴ While the Bolsheviks retained control of the

¹ The finances of *Vperyod* remain something of a mystery. Rumours were current later that the Bolsheviks secretly received money from the Japanese—a view recently recalled by A. Moorehead (*The Russian revolution* (London, 1958), p. 65). This does not accord with what is known about Lenin's attitude to the war, and his hostility to the Finnish Activist party, which *did* collaborate actively with the enemy. On the other hand, Bonch-Bruевич clearly exaggerates the extent to which the Geneva Bolsheviks were dependent upon chance sources of credit and 'workers' contributions' (*Kak pechatalis' . . . zapreshchennye izdaniya nashey partii* (M., 1924), p. 107). Most probably the money came from wealthy sympathizers in Russia. In December 1904 Lenin appealed to the Moscow merchant A. I. Yermasov for a subsidy of 2,000 roubles per month, but it is not clear whether it was paid (*Leninskiy sbornik*, xv. 263).

² *Leninskiy sbornik*, xv. 217ff.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 252; *Lenin*, xviii. 396.

⁴ *Pis'ma*, pp. 98–99; *Leninskiy sbornik*, vii. 112–19.

Caucasian Union, this body was soon reduced to ineffectiveness by the secession of its chief member-organizations, which came under Menshevik leadership. In April 1904 the Baku committee suddenly withdrew its initial support for Lenin's campaign. The success of a nominally Menshevik organization in directing the strike in the Baku oilfields in December enhanced the Mensheviks' prestige, and by February 1905 Zhordaniya's call of 'Down with Lenin!' was said to have been hailed by a cheering crowd.¹ In Tiflis, Zhordaniya's main stronghold, he defeated the Bolshevik leader M. Tskhakaya in the race for popular support.² At Batum the local Bolshevik leader was a man whom even his own supporters referred to as a dictator.³ The Mensheviks who ousted him were scarcely less ruthless—their opponents accused them of having assaulted their treasurer and appropriated their funds—but seem to have had more popular support. At any rate, while under Menshevik control the Batum committee made more trouble for the police than any other party organization in the country.

In the Ukraine, too, the Bolsheviks were at this time losing ground to their rivals. This was only natural in view of the southerners' role in bringing about the schism. In many cases the bold resolutions passed in support of Lenin's demands, ostensibly in the name of the entire local organization, had virtually no popular backing. Only one member of the Yekaterinoslav committee was present when one such resolution was passed in June 1904. The local Mensheviks, aware of their potential strength, denounced the committee as ineffective and demanded a democratic reform; the C.C. then intervened and obliged the Bolsheviks to yield control.⁴ Much the same pattern of events was repeated at Nikolayev and Odessa. The struggle in the latter city was particularly bitter: the Bolsheviks accused their opponents of obtaining support by bribery. The final breach here came a few days before 'Bloody Sunday'.⁵ The new committees that came into being at this time in the Ukraine

¹ *PR* (1925), no. 40, p. 24. For the resolutions, see N. Shakhov, pp. 42–43; *Iskra*, no. 62 (15 March 1904), appx., no. 69 (10 July 1904), no. 73–74 (1, 20 October 1904), appx.; P. Orlovsky [V. Vorovsky], *Sovet protiv partii*, pp. 6, 24–27; *Pis'ma*, p. 107. The organization was headed by two brothers named Shendrikov, whose unethical practices did not wholly commend themselves to the Menshevik leaders.

² *PR* (1925), no. 40, pp. 14, 42.

³ *PR* (1928), no. 76, p. 212. 'He himself decided which policemen, priests, or landowners were to be "bumped off" . . .,' this informant adds.

⁴ A. S. Shapovalov, op. cit., pp. 110–17. From his account it appears that national differences played a part here as well. The Mensheviks were largely Jewish, whereas the Bolsheviks were Russians or Ukrainians. See also *Iskra*, no. 86 (3 February 1905), appx., p. 3; N. Shakhov, pp. 65ff.; and S. I. Gopner, in *Voprosy istorii* (1955), no. 3, pp. 24–25.

⁵ *Iskra*, no. 70 (25 July 1904), appx., p. 2; 'Perepiska N. Lenina . . . s Odeskoy organizatsiei', in *PR* (1925), nos. 41–47.

were all pro-Menshevik; so, too, were most of the local organizations in Siberia. It was only in the Great Russian areas (including the Urals) that the Bolsheviks succeeded in holding their own. They were stronger than their rivals in Moscow and the smaller industrial towns of the centre. The margin of difference was narrower in St. Petersburg: the committee remained under Bolshevik control, but the opposition had a relatively strong counter-organization. In some of the less important centres the committee still included men of both factions; but this was becoming ever rarer.

Thus the pattern of factional allegiance coincided with fairly well-defined geographical areas. But these data are somewhat misleading unless it is borne in mind that the overwhelming majority of Party members were scarcely interested in the schism. There was a good deal of sympathy for the C.C. in its efforts at conciliation.¹ Even where committees voiced support for a new congress, they did so for reasons that had little in common with the motives of the Bolshevik leader. The general feeling was that a new congress was due shortly in any case (for according to the statute one had to be held every two years); if it were somewhat premature, this would do no harm, and might be useful in bringing the leaders together. Thus as 1904 drew to a close two things were becoming clear: that a congress would be called fairly soon; and that it would by no means be an unqualified triumph for Lenin.

At this moment Lenin's own supporters split, thereby making confusion worse confounded. At the third regional conference organized by the Bureau, held near St. Petersburg in December, M. M. Litvinov urged compliance with Lenin's instructions, but Bogdanov and Zemlyachka, who had been in contact with Krasin, refused to do so. Instead of declaring support for *Vperyod*, the conference formally requested the C.C. to convoke the congress. Only if this demand were rejected would the Bureau proceed to do so itself. Lenin was furious. It not only meant that the congress would be delayed, and might be called under the auspices of the 'conciliators'; it also meant that *Vperyod* had to appear

¹ At Tver in 1904, even after a pro-Leninist resolution had been 'pushed through' at the insistence of the committee's secretary, 'a significant number of comrades' still remained loyal to the C.C. (A. S. Shapovalov, p. 89). From Odessa one of Lenin's agents reported: 'there are very many Bolshevik workers who cannot yet rid themselves of "conciliationist" ideas, and go around preaching that the Bolsheviks are now doing what the Mensheviks were doing to start with, i.e. boycotting the centres and not allowing them to work' (*PR* (1925), no. 42, p. 18). The committee at Astrakhan welcomed the C.C.'s efforts at conciliation as 'the only way out from the blind alley into which the Party has been led by the dictatorship of Lenin . . . the Party's evil demon, [who is] paralysing its strength and waging a struggle against it' (*Byulleteni dlya partiynykh organizatsiy* (Geneva, 1905), no. 2 (March 1905), p. 2).

openly as his own personal organ, instead of as 'the voice of the Party'. He suspected his agents of the darkest treachery, even of diverting to his enemies funds which he needed for *Vperyod*. He bombarded them with frantic demands and warnings: 'Do not trust the Mensheviks or the C.C., but carry out a schism, a schism—unconditionally, everywhere, and in the most resolute manner. . . . We want to form a party of Vperyodists, and to break each and every connexion with the disorganizers. . . .'¹ But the Bureau bided its time, waiting for the C.C. to reply to its demand. Krasin was under pressure from two sides: from Bogdanov and from the Mensheviks, three of whom (Krokhmal, Rozanov, and Alexandrova) had at long last been co-opted to the C.C. in fulfilment of Krzhizhanovsky's long-standing undertaking. For some weeks he ignored the request until, on 7 February, he made up his mind: there was no good reason at the present time for an emergency congress, and in the light of Lenin's 'systematic campaign' against the C.C. in recent months it was impossible to regard him any longer as a member of that body—in other words, he was expelled.²

This seemed to be a new triumph for the Mensheviks. But two days later the *gendarmérie* intervened: nine of the eleven members of the C.C. then in Russia were arrested.³ This automatically strengthened Lenin's position. As he commented laconically, 'it will probably weaken the Mensheviks for a long time to come'.⁴ In the meantime Bogdanov had swung round to Lenin's support, and the Bureau had embarked on independent arrangements for the congress. It felt strong enough to reject Krasin's offer to co-opt some of its members to the C.C.⁵ Krasin was now obliged to modify his stand. He hoped that by taking a leading part in the arrangements he could prevent it becoming a mere sounding-board for Lenin. Accordingly on 4 March the C.C. announced that it was taking steps to call a congress, and two days later invited the Bureau to associate itself with this enterprise. Lenin was once again filled with alarm, and repeated his earlier warnings against compromise. But his advice was disregarded. On 12 March, after talks lasting ten hours, Gusev and P. P. Rumyantsev for the Bureau signed an agreement with Krasin. The latter promised that if necessary he would disregard the formal right of the Menshevik-controlled Party Council to convoke the congress. The Bureau conceded that the congress should not be considered legal unless three-quarters (not half, as the statute prescribed) of all the committees were represented.⁶

¹ *Lenin*, xxviii. 452.

² *Leninskiy sbornik*, xvi. 80–81.

³ The survivors were Krasin and A. I. Lyubimov. Cf. Krasin's cautious account in *Gody podpol'ya* (Lg., 1928), p. 215, and *PR* (1925), no. 36, pp. 83–84.

⁴ *Lenin*, xxviii. 467.

⁵ S. I. Gusev, in *PR* (1925), no. 37, p. 54.

⁶ *Zayavlenie s'yezdu sozvanomomu* 'Org. Komitetom' (Geneva, 1905), p. 6.

Lenin had to make the best of the situation. 'There is nothing damnable in this,' he noted; 'apparently there was no alternative.'¹

Meanwhile the Mensheviks had formally dissolved their *émigré* organization in the interests of unity, leaving it to the Council to put over their point of view. This body endeavoured to obstruct Lenin's agitation by various legalistic devices, notably a new method of calculating a quorum of committees.² On 8 March it issued a strongly-worded statement denouncing the Bureau's usurpation of its authority. Plekhanov's attitude was rigid in the extreme. Having denounced Lenin's campaign from the start as fraudulent, he saw no reason to change his mind simply because it had now been endorsed by the remnants of the C.C. This showed lack of political finesse: he seems to have assumed that Krasin had now lent Lenin his whole-hearted support, which was far from being the case. The differences between the Bolshevik leaders afforded the Party Council a scope for manœuvre of which it was slow to avail itself.

It was typical of the Mensheviks that at this stage in the dispute they should once again have resorted to intervention from outside. On 3 February August Bebel proposed, in letters to both sides, that he should head a five-man independent tribunal to adjudicate the quarrel. The Mensheviks, who had foreknowledge of the plan, accepted with alacrity; the Bolsheviks refused. Their Bureau replied rather haughtily that the schism was due to 'a conflict of political ideas', not to a clash of personalities. Lenin first drafted an abusive answer to Bebel, but then decided not to dispatch it; instead he temporized by saying that the forthcoming congress alone was competent to take a decision on his offer. But at this gathering the matter was shelved. Bebel called Lenin's behaviour 'criminal', but was scarcely less scathing about the Mensheviks, whom he thought hopelessly incompetent.³

Thus in April, when the delegates from the committees assembled in London, the Mensheviks found themselves outmanœuvred. On 20 April (N.S.) the Council suggested that an Organization Committee be formed under its control to check the delegates' qualifications, but the idea was of course rejected. It then proposed that the meeting should have the status of a conference, which should undertake certain (unspecified) reforms of the central bodies and so prepare the way for a genuinely representative congress. When this request was likewise turned down, *Iskra's* agent in London took two of the delegates to Geneva, where the Mensheviks held a conference of their own, attended by some activists who chanced to be abroad at the time. The London congress was

¹ *Lenin*, xxviii. 466.

² *Ibid.*, p. 378; *Leninskiy sbornik*, xv. 75-80.

³ Letter to Axelrod, 2 March 1905, in Axelrod Archives, Amsterdam; see D. Geyer's study of this episode cited on p. 145.

formally declared unconstitutional and its decisions not binding on the Party.

This charge was strictly speaking true. Of the 33 local committees qualified to attend only 21 were represented—which was more than half, but less than three-quarters, the fraction stipulated in the March agreement.¹ Moreover, delegates from the Caucasian Union were given eight votes, although this body no longer enjoyed the backing of its principal member-committees. The dubious legality of the congress troubled the consciences of some of those present. Lenin admitted that it was illegal 'according to the letter of the statute' but claimed that the widespread support it enjoyed from the rank and file made it permissible to overlook such formalities. Other speakers based their case upon a higher 'revolutionary morality' that justified any action taken for the good of the Party. 'There can be no two opinions about the legality of the congress [declared one delegate]. A congress is essential, and therefore it is legitimate for us to call one.' Tskhakaya was still more explicit: 'We Social Democrats have little in common with the bourgeois world. We have our own philosophy, our own law, our own ethics. . . . Begone, bourgeois ethics! Begone, bourgeois justice!'² The delegates responded with the enthusiasm of men conscious of their lofty mission: it seemed as though Lenin's vision of a cadre party staffed by professional revolutionaries was at last about to take shape.

The debates at this gathering lack the drama of those at the second Party congress two years earlier, and no purpose would be served by examining them in detail. The chief interest centres upon the emergence of various currents of opinion among the Bolsheviks and the degree to which they lent themselves to the designs of their leader. On tactical matters, as we have seen, Lenin had matters much his own way; but in the field of Party organization he was obliged to manoeuvre and compromise. Among the activists there was a group of conservatives and a larger group who deserve to be called reformists. The conservatives looked askance at any action that tended to weaken their authority over the rank and file. Buttressing themselves with quotations from *What is to be Done?*, they called for 'extreme caution' in admitting workers into the committees and condemned 'playing at democracy'. They denied that there was friction between intellectuals and workers in the Party: this was simply Menshevik propaganda. 'Are we not all proletarians, representatives of the interests of the entire proletariat?' exclaimed

¹ 'K 50-letiyu III-go s'yezda RSDRP', in *Istoricheskii arkhiv* (1955), no. 1, p. 36; *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1934), no. 62, p. 179. According to Lyadov, the Bolsheviks had a total of 46 votes out of a maximum of 71 (*PR* (1921), no. 3, p. 65). Lenin put it at 56 votes out of a maximum of 75 (*Prot. III*, p. 65).

² *Prot. III*, pp. 52, 56-57.

Tskhakaya.¹ The reformists felt that this was over-simplifying matters. They resented the preponderance of intellectuals in the committees, reflected in the composition of the present congress. They maintained that there were countless workers suitable to hold posts of responsibility, and called on the committee-men to 'plunge down to the lower depths'.² They believed that a social transformation of this kind would help to cleanse the atmosphere of intrigue and promote healthier relations between the leaders and the rank and file. To ensure a certain measure of democracy within the Party Postolovsky proposed an amendment to the statute empowering the C.C. to dissolve a committee on the demand of two-thirds of its 'periphery'. Several other changes were suggested in the same sense.

Lenin agreed with the reformists on the need for an infusion of fresh proletarian blood into the Party. But there were important differences between his approach and theirs. His aim was not to bring about a change in the Party's structure but simply to 'strengthen its ties with the masses'. For this reason he continued to insist, as the conservatives did, that new entrants to the committees should be carefully supervised.³ Uppermost in his mind, as always, was the question of power. He reasoned that the untutored workers suddenly brought into the Party could serve as an instrument for the leaders to crush the 'opportunist' intellectuals. He also seems to have realized that the Mensheviks were making some impression with their advocacy of democratic reforms, and especially with their call for elections to leading posts; he therefore sought to take the wind out of their sails by making concessions in this direction that were more apparent than real. He helped to draft a resolution which called for 'the broadest possible application of the electoral principle in Party life'. It was introduced by Bogdanov, who clumsily undermined its effect by declaring that only 'insignificant steps' could be taken in this direction at the present time. These subtleties were too much for the activists, who were used to plain speaking: if democracy were ruled out, one of them said, it was dishonest to 'flaunt democratic phrases'. The Lenin-Bogdanov resolution was defeated by 12 votes to 9½.⁴

Lenin was now obliged to meet the reformists half-way. He accepted Postolovsky's resolution (although with an amendment designed to prevent the *intellectual* element in the periphery from bringing about a committee's fall), and another amendment to the statute permitting every organization to publish literature on its own account. This ensured a certain freedom of discussion within the Party.⁵ He seems to have

¹ Ibid., p. 54.

² Ibid., pp. 259, 263.

³ Ibid., p. 265.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 254-5, 336. Lenin's resolution also called for an increase in the number of workers holding leading posts in the Party.

⁵ Ibid., p. 293.

reckoned that the disadvantages of these concessions to the spirit of the times could be neutralized by consolidating his own position at the centre of power. One observer justly described the revised statute as 'a Turkish constitution'. The tripartite arrangement at the summit was now abolished, and the Central Committee established (ostensibly, at least) as the supreme permanently-functioning body. This was a reform ardently desired by most committee-men, and especially by Krasin, whose eloquent speech in its favour was little more than a veiled attack on Lenin. He referred to 'the emigration' as 'an obstacle impeding the further development of the Party along proper lines', and sat down to the applause of the assembled delegates.¹

But if the latter imagined that, by making the C.O. dependent on the C.C. (which was in future to appoint one of its members as editor), they had brought about a real shift in the location of power, they were soon disillusioned. It would take stronger measures to clip Lenin's wings. So long as the C.O. was published abroad, and co-optations to the C.C. needed a unanimous vote by its members, Lenin's power was absolute—for he would be the only C.C. member immune from the risk of arrest, through his residence abroad, and could veto any nomination of which he disapproved. No one dared to suggest that the Party's paper should be published in Russia, or that Lenin be replaced as editor. There was, however, a good deal of opposition to the right of veto. 'This will enable one trouble-maker to delay the entire work of the Party', declared Postolovsky. But an amendment eliminating it was defeated by 13 votes to 6. It was then late in the evening, and the delegates were weary and inattentive. Not until afterwards did eleven of them realize what was at stake, and file a plea for the question to be re-examined. They were coldly informed that it was 'contrary to all parliamentary procedure' for a decision taken in due form to be revoked.² They had no better success with their effort to open discussion on a secret resolution obliging the C.C. to hold a conference with its '*émigré* section' (i.e. Lenin) at least three times a year, which they feared would seriously impede its work.³

Thus the reformists' attempts to impose some form of check upon the powers of the Bolshevik leader fizzled out ineffectively. It was the same story when the congress took up the question of relations with the Mensheviks. Almost all the delegates from Russia were in a tolerant frame of mind and anxious for unity. From first-hand experience they knew that the Mensheviks were not traitors, as Lenin alleged, and that co-operation with them was both desirable and possible. Tskhakaya warned against the dangers of exclusiveness. Lunacharsky even went so

¹ *Prot. III*, pp. 280-3.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 278, 302, 323-5.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-8n., 323n.; *PR* (1924), no. 25, p. 186.

far as to hold up the British House of Commons as a model for the Party to follow with regard to the relations between 'government' and 'opposition'.¹ In the face of such sentiments Lenin refrained from tabling a resolution he had drafted calling for the Mensheviks to be expelled from the Party. Instead he proposed that, while the ideological struggle against them should continue, they should be invited to collaborate as individuals in Bolshevik-run organizations, on condition that they recognized the validity of the congress and the revised Party statute; they would have freedom to propagate their views but must abide by Party discipline. The activists accepted this draft, although it clearly implied unity through surrender, rather than unity through compromise. The C.C. was entrusted with the task of working out conditions for ending the schism at the national level.² The question now arose as to the instructions to be given to the C.C. in this task. One delegate suggested that it should refrain from agitation in the periphery of Menshevik committees. This idea brought Lenin to his feet and was hastily discarded. Instead the C.C. was empowered to dissolve Menshevik committees and to form rival organizations once it had been established, after 'the most careful examination', that they were unwilling to accept 'Party' (i.e. Bolshevik) discipline. In this way the accent was still laid very definitely on continued factional struggle, as Lenin desired, and the activists' point of view was disregarded.³

It was perhaps some comfort to the Mensheviks that Krasin was among those elected to the C.C., and that Lenin's influence on Party affairs in Russia was diminished by the course of events in these months of crisis. But the total effect of the London congress was to incline the balance of power significantly in favour of their rivals. It also enhanced the prestige of Lenin, as the man who had brought it about and who laid his imprint upon all its deliberations. To a growing extent Bolshevism and Leninism now began to be identified. In the Party at large the question of the legality of the congress was brushed aside; most people were prepared to accept it as a *fait accompli*. For this result the Mensheviks were themselves largely to blame. It is clear from the proceedings that from their point of view it was unwise to abandon the London congress to their rivals.

Their own impromptu conference in Geneva was a feeble affair.⁴ Since it was not a representative congress, its resolutions were not considered binding. Those present took a few hesitant steps towards the democratization of the Party which were hardly adequate to meet

¹ Ibid., p. 359.

² Ibid., pp. 342, 362, 670.

³ Ibid., p. 363n.

⁴ *Iskra*, no. 100 (15 May 1905), appx. Those attending the conference represented nine committees and four periphery organizations. No delegates were present from Transcaucasia, although the Tiflis committee was one of several that later expressed its support for the decisions of the conference.

current problems. On the main issue before them, the attitude to be taken towards the Bolsheviks, the conference gave no clear lead. Presumably at the insistence of Martov and Dan, the delegates rejected Plekhanov's advice that they should issue a strongly-worded manifesto denouncing the London gathering and calling on the Party to rally to their side. Plekhanov then resigned from *Iskra*, condemning the Mensheviks' views on organization as 'bad from start to finish'.¹ On the other hand, they would not accept their adversaries' terms: disband their committees, and utilize the freedom of discussion which was promised them in an effort to convert the Party to their point of view. Either course was politically possible. Instead they simply renounced their claim to represent the Party as a whole, in the delusion that this would facilitate re-unification. Naturally this was taken by the Bolsheviks as a confession of weakness; and the talks held between representatives of the two factions during the summer led nowhere. The local committees were left to work out relations with rival groups as best they could. In this way organized Menshevism virtually committed suicide.

To make matters worse for the Mensheviks, they found themselves isolated from the Social-Democratic parties of the national minorities as well. It was only to be expected that the Bund, conscious of its strength and anxious for support from non-Jewish elements, should seek to reconcile the two warring Russian factions. Their efforts in this direction dated back to the summer of 1904, when they had met with a rebuff. A few months later they obtained the backing of the Lettish Social Democrats for a conference at Zurich. Since the S.D.K.P.L. refused to attend, nothing substantial was achieved.² In the months that followed the Polish and Jewish socialists succeeded in overcoming their distrust of one another, and in September the Bund was able to hold a conference at Riga that was attended by all the principal Marxist groups, including both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. The chief topic of conversation was the attitude to be adopted towards the 'Bulygin Duma'. The Mensheviks were as critical as anyone of the Government's plan for an assembly elected on a restricted franchise. But they believed that the elections to it could be utilized to focus popular opposition to the régime and promote the development of the revolution. Axelrod suggested that those who had no vote under the electoral law should be encouraged to choose deputies of their own, who might then form themselves into a 'people's Duma' or 'workers' congress'; the latter could then compete with the 'Bulygin Duma' for

¹ *Plekhanov*, xiii. 286; *Perepiska*, ii. 231.

² D. Geyer, op. cit., pp. 426-7; M. Rafes, in *PR* (1922), no. 11, pp. 167-81; *Perepiska*, ii. 206.

popular support.¹ To many people this plan seemed dangerously unrealistic—although it was to recur, in a slightly different form, later in 1905 and to receive a triumphant vindication in the revolution of 1917, when the Congresses of Soviets played a role *vis-à-vis* the Provisional Government rather similar to that envisaged many years before by Axelrod for his ‘workers’ congress’. At the time it was interpreted as a retreat from the commitment to armed insurrection, which had become something of a revolutionary talisman. When the Menshevik delegate to the Riga conference put forward a motion in this sense, he failed to win any support whatsoever.²

From the narrow party-political standpoint the Bolsheviks had good reason to be satisfied with their achievements. However, their success seemed less substantial when viewed in the light of the general political situation in Russia. In the competition for the loyalty of the turbulent crowds, now hearkening to the Party’s call for revolution, the Mensheviks had one inestimable advantage: their readiness to encourage spontaneous action by the masses. The Bolsheviks’ appeal, by contrast, was to the militant *élite*. With the power of the autocracy weakened, and vastly increased opportunities available for propaganda in an open public forum, a narrow clandestine party could not hope to enjoy a monopoly of power.

¹ P. B. Axelrod, *Narodnaya дума i rabochiy s’yezd* (Geneva, 1905); *Iskra*, nos. 101, 106, 108 (Cherevanin), 109 (Martov).

² M. Rafes, *op. cit.*, pp. 188–99; A. D. Kirzhnits, 1905: *yevreyskoye rabocheye dvizhenie* (M.-Lg., 1928), p. 162.

VII

BAPTISM OF FIRE

THE treaty signed at Portsmouth (U.S.A.) on 23 August 1905 brought Russia peace without victory. To many it seemed as though all the sacrifice had been in vain. There was a widespread feeling of frustration and disenchantment which the promise of a national assembly did little to alleviate. There was grumbling at rising prices and the scarcity of consumer goods. Where the police and military acted to prevent discussion of political issues, this aroused keen resentment. Where they refrained from doing so, owing to fear of reprisals or lack of confidence in their ability to enforce the law, this encouraged the view that concessions could be won by sustained pressure. For all these reasons men and women living in the cities now listened with increased readiness to the ubiquitous revolutionary orators—caring little about party labels, or the precise content of their speeches, but responding with evident enthusiasm to their militant tone, which seemed to express so well their own half-conscious sentiments.

⌈ The circulation of the radical press rose by leaps and bounds! Editors became bolder, publishers more enterprising. Books, pamphlets, and articles appeared written by well-known Western European liberal and socialist leaders, and even by left-wing Russian *émigrés*. Cheap editions of the Marxist classics could be obtained without much difficulty at certain book-shops. ⌈ The relaxation of the censorship and other controls was in part the product of administrative confusion and in part a deliberate act of policy. Trepov thought it advisable to allow opponents of the Government some legal means of ventilating their grievances. He believed that the threat to the security of the régime, although serious, could be contained; the police would keep a close eye on all public meetings and would act at the first sign of major disorders. The same reasoning lay behind the decision to appoint a respected liberal jurist, Prince S. N. Trubetskoy, rector of Moscow University, and to grant a measure of autonomy to all institutions of higher learning. ⌈ The new 'provisional regulations' promulgated on 27 August accorded students the formal right to set up independent organizations and to hold meetings. ⌈ Trepov had an old-fashioned military man's propensity to over-simplify political problems. Convinced that the students were the principal 'rebellious element', he assumed that if they were

encouraged to return to normal academic pursuits the opposition movement would lose much of its vigour.

[Witte wrote later, with the benefit of hindsight, that 'the decree on university autonomy . . . was the first breach through which the revolution, having matured underground, emerged into the broad light of day.'¹] The authorities underestimated the resourcefulness of the socialist leaders. The Menshevik organ *Iskra* was read quite widely outside the Party's ranks. In July Dan contributed an article suggesting that, when the new academic year began on 1 September, the students should call off their strike, which had been in progress since February, and return to the universities—not to resume their studies, but to throw open the lecture-halls to the people.² The idea first originated with Zasulich. It was consistent with the general Menshevik strategy of forming islands of 'revolutionary self-government' to prepare the ground for a mass offensive against the régime. It was a somewhat less abstract notion than that of a 'workers' congress', but both schemes owed more to the *émigrés'* familiarity with the history of European revolutions than to their awareness of contemporary Russian realities. It might well have remained a dead letter had it not been for the edict of 27 August.

The 'academic strike' was in any case beginning to crack under pressure from the more moderate elements, and this may help to explain the welcome that *Iskra's* plan received. It is also true that by this time a sizable proportion of the student body at the main university centres were sympathetic to the Party's teachings. In St. Petersburg University 1,702 votes were cast in favour of a resolution endorsing the Social Democrats' tactics; only 243 followed the S.R.s in advocating a continuation of the strike. The non-party moderates and conservatives, who abstained, mustered only 77 votes, and were unable to prevent the radicals from carrying out their intentions.³ The activist element was probably a good deal smaller than these figures suggest, since a fair amount of courage was required to oppose the prevailing trend; not all those who followed the Social Democrats' lead will have identified themselves wholly with the Party. Nevertheless, the influence of the hard core was sufficiently pervasive for St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, and a number of other university centres to experience what one contemporary called a 'meeting epidemic'. [In the evening, after normal tuition had ceased, the lecture-halls would swiftly fill with a variegated throng—mainly workmen, but with a leaven of intellectuals and other persons from 'society'.] The crowds seemed to

¹ S. Yu. Witte, *Vospominaniya* (M. 1960), ii. 544.

² *Iskra*, no. 107 (29 July 1905).

³ V. Voytinsky, *Gody pobed i porazheniy* (Berlin-Pg.-M., 1923), i. 50, 85.

grow larger from day to day. The standard of oratory was seldom high, but even the most inexperienced speaker could be assured of a sympathetic audience. Men hitherto denied the delights of uninhibited discussion relished every fresh morsel of information set before them. Their mood was for the most part one of naïve idealism, of faith in revolution as the key to immediate satisfaction of their most urgent wants. (In some ways it resembled the atmosphere in Gapon's meeting-houses prior to the march on the Winter Palace—with the significant difference that the tone was now set by the radical left.) For the first time large bodies of men began to feel the emotions that Marxist intellectuals had long attributed to them: a sense of class solidarity and an aggressive fighting spirit.) As Trotsky wrote later, with pardonable exaggeration:

Here the orators of the revolution reigned unchallenged. Here Social Democracy bound together with an indissoluble living political bond the countless atoms that comprised the people, and translated the mighty social passions of the masses into the refined language of revolutionary slogans. The crowds that entered the portals of the University emerged transformed. . . .¹

[The meetings provided a focal-point around which the inchoate opposition to the *status quo* was able to crystallize. They led to a movement of popular protest that obliged the autocracy to yield, and to promise the country a constitutional régime.]

Perhaps the most startling aspect of these developments was the growth of Social-Democratic influence in Moscow. Of all Russian cities the nation's second capital, with its patriarchal ways and relatively efficient police apparatus, had hitherto proved least responsive to the appeals of revolutionary propaganda. As late as July 1905 workers at one large textile mill had refused to listen to agitators advocating an eight-hour day, let alone hear their political views; the younger men, who were willing to stage a demonstration, allowed themselves to be overruled by the more conservative elements, and the Party stalwart waiting outside the factory gates to lead the procession was so distressed that he burst into tears.² But the very fickleness of these unsophisticated men could operate to the revolutionaries' advantage. They were capable of swift changes of mood; they could embrace and abandon novel ideas with a sudden fervour alien to their more equanimous colleagues in St. Petersburg. There was an element of old Russia in their unpredictable response to the new opportunities confronting them. Another important factor in the situation in Moscow was the degree

¹ L. D. Trotsky, 1905 (M.-Lg., 1925), p. 85.

² M. I. Vasilyev-Yuzhin, 'Iz vospominaniy o moskovskom vosstanii 1905 g.', in *PR* (1922), no. 5, p. 186.

of confusion produced in official quarters by frequent changes of personnel.¹

It was characteristic that an awareness of the advantages of organization should have come first to the more skilled and cultured workers, employed for the most part in small enterprises, rather than those whose social position most closely resembled that of 'proletarians' in the Marxist sense. The Moscow printers, as we know, had formed a clandestine trade union as early as 1903. By the summer of 1905 it claimed 300 active members. The leaders were elected. The most prominent figure, V. V. Sher, was a member of the small Menshevik group in Moscow, and the union became something of a Menshevik stronghold.² On 19 September the printers employed at the largest establishment in the city struck work in support of a claim for higher wages. Their demands were taken up by the union and both Party organizations. The strike spread to other printing works, and then to other groups of employees. On 22 September clashes occurred between groups of strikers and police. Firearms were used, and further affrays of the same kind took place during the days that followed. It was the first time that violence on this scale had been seen in the streets of Moscow, and the press emphasized its significance. One incident in particular attracted attention: an unprovoked attack by gendarmes on a building where some bakery workers were holding an officially sanctioned meeting. Some men were killed, and about a hundred strikers were arrested. It was a repetition in miniature of the tragedy of 9 January. The men's leaders, who escaped arrest, naturally exploited it to the maximum. To extend the strike they formed an elected council of deputies (soviet), on which men working in various trades and occupations were represented. It held ten meetings during the last week of September and the first week of October, attended by an ever-increasing number of delegates, whose mood swiftly became more radical. Curiously enough, neither

¹ In January 1905 the city lost both its governor-general, Grand Duke Sergey, who was shortly afterwards assassinated, and its chief of police, D. F. Trepov, who moved to St. Petersburg. Trepov's two successors each lasted only a few weeks: the first resigned, and the second was assassinated. The post of governor-general was taken by the senile General Kozlov, whose main qualification for office was that he had been police chief in the city twenty-five years earlier; he, too, fell victim to a terrorist attack. His successor, P. P. Durnovo—not surprisingly, perhaps, in the circumstances—sought a reconciliation with 'society' by relaxing police controls. After the promulgation of the October Manifesto there were further changes of personnel in the higher ranks of the administration, which became still more demoralized (*Istoriya Moskvy*, (M., 1955), v. 668–9).

² V. V. Sher, 'Moskovskiye pechatniki v revolyutsii 1905 g.' [based on an account written in 1911], in *Moskovskiye pechatniki v 1905 g.*, ed. A. Borshchevsky and others (M., 1924), p. 42.

of the two local Party groups seems to have attached any particular importance to this organization, which was allowed to die a natural death once the strike was over.¹

The protest of the Moscow printers evoked an echo among their colleagues in St. Petersburg, but concessions by the employers caused the movement to subside. The men's demands were chiefly economic. By the very nature of their trade the printers were badly cast for the role of vanguard in the nationwide general strike that now loomed on the horizon. This part could best be played by the railwaymen and other communications workers.

The Railwaymen's Union, as we have seen, was bent on launching a general strike. This led to coolness between it and the League of Unions, which was now engrossed in arguments over constitutional questions. It would have been logical for the railwaymen to drift into the orbit of the R.S.D.R.P., but this did not happen. The more extreme railwaymen had misgivings about the strike plan, which in their eyes smacked of syndicalism. In none of the Party's publications had this idea as yet been seriously discussed. All those susceptible to Social-Democratic teaching had their eyes trained upon the goal of insurrection.² The Ministry of Transport sought to divert the movement into less dangerous channels. It authorized the election of deputies to a conference in St. Petersburg, which opened on 20 September, to discuss revision of the rules governing pension and savings funds. The question was one of great concern to railwaymen of all grades, and the preparations for it were followed with lively interest. The left-wing parties called for a boycott of the elections, but the campaign misfired. Acting, it appears, largely on their own initiative, the radical delegates attempted to make the conference independent of official control. They demanded the right to elect a chairman from the floor and to publish periodical bulletins. The Ministry, anxious to conciliate them, agreed. They then proposed that the pension arrangements be completely overhauled, and took up various other grievances—political as well as economic. The conference delegates had access to the railway telegraph system. This was a factor of cardinal importance. It enabled them to dispatch frequent reports to the line committees on the state of the negotiations. In reply came messages urging them to adopt a resolute stand. The pressure from below drove the moderate delegates to the left; and soon the conference, which had opened without attracting much notice, became a centre of attention for opposition elements of every hue.

The Railwaymen's Union leaders were finding it difficult to restrain

¹ Loc. cit., pp. 53ff.

² Romanov, in *Obrazovanie* (1907), no. 6, p. 32.

their supporters from initiating local action over minor grievances, and decided that the time had come to launch the long-awaited general strike. The Moscow network committee approached the local Mensheviks, who stated that in their view the present moment was unsuitable for action on such a major scale; they agreed to endorse a strike at the local level only, 'leaving everything else to the responsibility of the Union'.¹ The Union leaders had to rely upon their own resources. Most of their supporters were in favour of immediate action. On 8 October work ceased on the Moscow-Kazan railway, where the Union had a strong organization. Other local lines soon followed suit. Their list of demands culminated in calls for an amnesty, civil freedoms, and a democratically elected constituent assembly. By 10 October the entire Moscow network was at a standstill. The Union's Central Bureau kept railwaymen in the provinces informed of the progress of the strike, which, in the words of one leader, 'swiftly leapt from one line to another, destroying every obstacle in its path, like the flames of some colossal fire, driven forward by the wind: Russia had never seen anything to compare with it'.² Those networks predominantly under Social-Democratic influence, such as that at Kharkov, joined in the movement of protest. In some places damage was done to rolling-stock and other equipment. The railway telegraphists withdrew their labour, disrupting the entire communications system. In the larger towns work ceased in most factories. In St. Petersburg, one of the last major centres to be affected, this occurred on 12 and 13 October. The press, which during the first few days had added to the general ferment by publishing details of the growing unrest, was now silent.

In all this the Social Democrats played a modest, but not unimportant role: producing leaflets to keep men informed of the situation, and bringing them out into the streets. At public meetings their oratory was often effective. Before long they were able to give the movement a new rallying-point: the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Their influence increased as the strike progressed. But little direction or control was exercised from any quarter over the course of events: the movement of protest developed a dynamic of its own. The left-wing groups by and large collaborated smoothly, although there were occasions when the Social Democrats attempted to assert their

¹ V. N. Perevertsev, in *Byloye* (1925), no. 32, p. 50. The writer, a senior officer of the union with S.R. affiliations, only refers to the Menshevik 'Group' in this connexion. Possibly for political reasons at the time of writing, he makes no mention of the Bolshevik Moscow Committee. In his recent study W. Sablinsky assumes that this attitude was shared by the Bolsheviks as well, but there seems to be no firm evidence that this was actually so.

² *Ibid.*, p. 51.

independence.¹ The most impressive feature of the October strike was its comprehensive character. It embraced, not only railwaymen and industrial workers in the principal centres,² but also a large segment of the middle class. Some employers later compensated their workmen for time lost by the strike, which they felt had performed a useful public service. The *zemstvo* leaders were on the whole sympathetic. The Constitutional Democrats (Kadets), who were in the act of holding their inaugural party congress, announced their whole-hearted support. The League of Unions enhanced the effect of the stoppage by bringing out groups of professional men—office employees, artists, lawyers, and even the dignitaries of the Ruling Senate (although the latter, admittedly, acted under pressure rather than from conviction).³ It was this universality of the strike that impressed the conservatives. For five days Nicholas II and his advisers found themselves virtually isolated at Peterhof, facing a country that appeared to be gripped by some strange paralysis. It was this situation that in the final instance induced the Tsar to issue the constitutional manifesto of 17 October—a turning-point in the 1905 revolution and a landmark in Russian history.⁴

In this document Nicholas announced his firm intention

to grant the people the immutable foundations of civil liberty, based upon genuine inviolability of the person and freedom of conscience, speech, assembly, and union; secondly, while not suspending the appointed elections to the State Duma, to draw to participation in it those classes of the population at present entirely deprived of electoral rights . . . , reserving to the legislative system hereby established further development of the principle of universal suffrage; thirdly, to establish it as an immutable principle that no law shall take effect without the approval of the State Duma.⁴

¹ In Moscow liberal elements prevailed upon the City Duma to disregard juridical formalities and summon a conference of some forty 'public organizations', at which Prince P. I. Dolgorukov, a distinguished *zemstvo* leader, proposed that a popular militia be formed under a 'committee of public safety'. The Mensheviks were willing to support this proposal, along with all the other left-wing groups except the Bolsheviks. Their spokesman, S. Chernomordik, launched a torrent of invective against 'the bourgeoisie' for their 'treachery'. The upshot was that the Duma decided to keep the militia well under its own control. (It never became a very effective force.) See S. Chernomordik, 'Moskovskiy komitet v Gorodskoy Dume 15-go oktyabrya', in N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), *Dekabr'skoye vosstanie v Moskve 1905 g.* (M., 1919), pp. 42-57; N. I. Astrov, *Vospominaniya* (Paris, 1941), i. 320ff.; M. N. Lyadov, *Iz zhizni partii* (M., 1926), p. 93.

² According to official statistics, only one-third of the 1.6 million workers subject to the factory inspectorate struck work in October (V. Varzar, op. cit., p. 6).

³ A. Kerensky, *Crucifixion of liberty* (L., 1934), p. 108.

⁴ *Polnoye sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoy Imperii* (Spb., 1909), xxv. no. 26803.

The manifesto concluded with an appeal for the restoration of 'peace and tranquillity'. Shortly afterwards Witte was appointed President of the Council of Ministers (a new post, equivalent to Prime Minister) and charged with implementing these undertakings.

(The 'October Manifesto', as it quickly came to be called, seemed to grant the principal demands put forward by the opposition. It was in effect an appeal to the nation to believe that the Government had undergone a change of heart, and that a constitutional régime would be established—although the word 'constitution' was not mentioned in the document itself. The average articulate citizen received the Manifesto with a sense of relief and exhilaration: he saw it as a victory for 'the people' over 'reaction'.] Like most generalizations, this was misleading. It grossly underestimated the resources on which the conservatives could draw. It led most people who sympathized with the aims of the opposition to indulge in unwarranted optimism about the strength of Russian liberalism, and to disregard the fragile basis on which the new constitutional (or quasi-constitutional) order rested. They failed to appreciate the extent of the gulf that existed in official circles between the advocates of reform and the protagonists of autocracy.] Only many years later, with the publication of Witte's memoirs, did it become clear how much the October Manifesto owed to the personal initiative of this far-sighted but contradictory figure.¹ Its form and content were the product of complicated back-stage manoeuvres. Owing to the intrigues of Witte's conservative opponents, the country received a tremendous psychological jolt, and its entry into the constitutional era was rendered more abrupt than it would have been if the new Prime Minister's sage advice had been followed. The prestige of the autocracy was undermined, since it had plainly yielded under duress. A further consequence was that Nicholas was formally committed to a liberal policy in which he did not believe. [Instead of the 'peace and tranquillity' to which he looked forward there was increased turbulence and disorder. Indeed, for the next few weeks the country seemed to teeter on the brink of anarchy.]

[In the chaotic situation that now ensued three main factors were involved.] The first was the weakness of the Government—the result both of Witte's own vacillations and the contradictory pressures to which he was subjected. [The second was the disintegration of the opposition into a multiplicity of parties and groups,] which could neither provide the Government with support nor offer any realistic alternative

¹ S. Yu. Witte, *Vospominaniya* (M., 1960), iii. 10–53; A. A. Mosolov, pp. 134–47. On Witte as Prime Minister, see T. von Laue, 'Count Witte and the Russian revolution of 1905' in *Amer. Slavic and E. Europ. Rev.* (1958), xvii, 25–46.

to it. The third was the increase in mass violence, particularly in the cities, where continual strikes and street clashes took place, culminating in attempts at insurrection. There was also serious unrest among the peasants and in the armed forces.

Faced with such conditions it was clearly too much to expect any government, however well-intentioned, to proceed with the orderly implementation of constitutional liberties. The re-establishment of order had to be given priority. But in maintaining itself in power Witte's Government used ruthless methods that differed little, if at all, from those employed under the régime of unlimited autocracy. The threat of anarchy or revolution was kept at bay; but the cost was high. It took the form of indiscriminate killing by military punitive expeditions and the sentencing of thousands to imprisonment or exile. What this meant in human terms can only be surmised: the effects were to be felt in 1917. So fierce was the struggle that it sealed the fate of Witte's own modestly liberal ideals. Every success in re-establishing the Government's authority strengthened the hands of those who were opposed to any constitutional experiments—until, in April 1906, the architect of the new order was obliged to resign his post. It was his paradoxical achievement that, by saving the monarchy, he had destroyed his own hopes of a gradual approximation to a political order on the Western European pattern.

The Prime Minister's most dangerous enemy was the Tsar. Nicholas never reconciled himself to what he called his 'terrible decision' to sign the October Manifesto, and continued to hope that he would sooner or later be able to repair the damage done to the sacred principle of unlimited autocracy. In this belief he was fortified by the evidence that monarchical sentiment was still very much alive. He listened readily to advisers who bolstered his prejudices against Witte and all that he symbolized. The latter endeavoured to counterbalance this pressure by seeking the support of moderate opinion. He wished to include representatives of liberal 'society' in his Government. But the talks held to this effect broke down. The *zemstvo* leaders and other public figures to whom he turned suspected, rightly or wrongly, that they were being asked to play a purely decorative role in Witte's régime.¹ As a result the new cabinet was composed in the main of technicians—officials who had no very high public standing and were ill-equipped to pursue constructive policies.

¹ The main obstacle to agreement was Witte's insistence on the appointment as Minister of the Interior of P. N. Durnovo, whose ruthlessness and earlier indiscretion made him unacceptable to the opposition. Witte later wrote that the appointment was 'one of my most grievous mistakes' (op. cit., iii. 77). See D. N. Shipov, *Vospominaniya i dumy* (M., 1918), pp. 334-49; P. N. Milyukov, *Tri popytki* (Paris, 1921), pp. 7-25 and *Vospominaniya* (N.Y., 1955), i. 320-30.

(Perhaps the most grievous shortcoming of the new Government—explicable only in the light of its insecurity—was its failure to define clearly the rights and freedoms that Russian citizens were now supposed to enjoy.) How were the principles of the October Manifesto to be reconciled with existing laws? What was actually meant by the phrase, 'the immutable foundations of civil liberty'? Opposition spokesmen, basing themselves on a literal reading of the Manifesto, argued that everyone now had the right to hold public meetings, express themselves freely, and form political organizations. As soon as such bodies endeavoured to assert their claims, they posed a direct challenge to the existing civilian and military authorities, whose powers had not been revoked. There was thus ample scope for confusion and conflict. The struggle between the old order and the new had to be decided by violence, or the threat of violence; and the outcome depended on the balance of forces in each locality, which varied widely.

Even in normal times communications were something of a problem. Now they were seriously impeded by strikes and other disorders. Late in December the head of the Police Department reported to the Tsar that he had been unable to contact his subordinates in Transcaucasia for a fortnight. The instructions sent out from St. Petersburg were in any case often less than helpful, and local officials were left to decide the most crucial questions on their own responsibility. The problems they faced were complicated by the varied nature of the resistance they encountered, and by disagreements among themselves as to the relative merits of a 'hard' or 'soft' course. In some places the civilians were at loggerheads with the military. Elsewhere there was friction between the governor, his officials, and the police. One provincial governor at first treated the Manifesto as a forgery, and resigned when he learned that it was genuine. Most of the senior officials accepted the new order, although with inner reservations. A few found themselves borne along by a movement too powerful for them to resist, and thereby helped to consolidate the authority of the liberals or socialists.

This confusion gave the opposition groups, where they were united, the chance to exercise a considerable influence. Fortunately for the conservatives, in most cities such unity did not exist. The October Manifesto aggravated the rifts between moderates and radicals: in this respect its vagueness was an advantage. The most important questions were still left open. There were endless opportunities for argument as to the merits of violent and non-violent methods of struggle, and the proportions in which they were to be combined.

In many towns the moderate elements, faced with the prospect of serious local disorders, adopted a flexible line, collaborating fairly

¹ *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1925), nos. 11-12, pp. 176-7.

readily with left-wing groups in the hope of maintaining civil peace. On a national level the liberals adopted a more cautious attitude. They were alarmed at the extent of the threat to legality, which underlined the risks inherent in any further democratic experiments. The 'Union of 17 October', as it eventually came to call itself, was prepared to support the Government politically to the extent that it adhered sincerely to the principles of the Manifesto. Further reforms, its leader believed, could best be obtained through the Duma. A somewhat similar standpoint was adopted by the last of the congresses of *zemstvo* and municipal representatives, which met in Moscow early in November. It adopted a resolution condemning 'anarchy' and declared its approval of the principle of constitutional monarchy. Another resolution calling for a constituent assembly was defeated by 137 votes to 80. This demand was the principal point at issue between the *zemstvo* leaders and the Kadets. This party inherited the Liberation League's radical programme of political and social reform. On immediate tactics its leaders spoke with several voices. They were all in favour of utilizing the forthcoming Duma, along with other opportunities for 'legal' activity, as a means of securing further constitutional concessions. (While they did not rule out revolutionary action, they did not consider an insurrection desirable—still less as an end in itself.

This was sufficient for the Kadets to be denounced as 'traitors to the people' by the Social Democrats and others/ on the extreme left of the Russian political spectrum. Throughout this period of crisis/ the R.S.D.R.P. never allowed itself to forget its socialist mission: indeed, opposition to 'mere' constitutional democracy, and to those who sought to achieve it, virtually became the Party's trade-mark.¹ The general tendency among the Social Democrats was to emphasize wherever possible the points of difference between themselves and the non-socialist left. They did not ask themselves whether this narrow attitude would help or hinder the realization of the Party's immediate objectives. By the autumn of 1905 they had become prisoners of their own forward momentum. Many factors contributed to encourage among them a spirit of boundless ambition: satisfaction at their recent successes, programmatic commitment to unfettered democracy, and empirical observation of Witte's half-hearted constitutionalism. /As

¹ On the evening of 17 October one Social-Democratic activist in Kharkov burst into a Party meeting crying 'Hurrah! a constitution!' His outburst was received in stony silence. Finally one of his comrades remarked censoriously that, although a brave man who enjoyed the respect of all, he deserved to be excluded from the organization for his misplaced and untimely enthusiasm (1905 g. v ocherkakh i vospominaniyakh uchastnikov (M., 1927), p. 107). Voytinsky relates a somewhat similar story from his experiences in St. Petersburg (*Gody pobed i porazheniy* (Berlin-Pg.-M., 1923), i. 166).

they saw it, 'tsarism' had been forced to yield under popular pressure: one more onslaught, and it would give way to a revolutionary régime!

Unparalleled opportunities now existed for the Party to influence public opinion. In most of the larger cities they could say—and print—virtually whatever they wished, so that in later histories this epoch was often referred to as 'the days of freedom'. The flood of pamphlet literature was swelled by several newspapers, which flaunted their official Party character in defiance of the censorship. These organs adopted the same exalted and militant tone that had been customary in the clandestine press: they were first and foremost instruments of agitation. In the streets the Social Democrats were undeniably the masters of the hour. No other left-wing group could rival them in emotional appeal—except on the agrarian question, when the S.R.s came into their own. Tournaments between orators from the two rival socialist parties often drew large crowds. It was relatively rare for liberals to venture on to the public tribunes, while the conservatives, unused to controversy, were apparently afraid to present their case. As the situation changed, of course, meetings would be broken up by police and troops, as in the past, and issues of Party newspapers would be confiscated and destroyed. But at first the local authorities were often too uncertain of themselves to intervene.

This open revolutionary agitation brought a sharp reaction from extremists of the right. The so-called 'black hundreds', which had made their appearance in some centres earlier in the year, became much more active after October. They ventilated their fears and hatreds by attacking those whom they held, or pretended to hold, responsible for the troubles afflicting the country. Their chief victims were to be found among the Jewish element of the population. Towards the end of October there was a wave of pogroms far more extensive than any outbreaks hitherto known. In Odessa alone some 3,000 people are believed to have been killed or injured, and the material damage amounted to three and a half million roubles.¹ Serious mob violence also occurred outside the 'pale of settlement', in such places as Tver, Tula, or Sormovo (near Nizhny Novgorod). These were in the nature of things anti-intellectual rather than anti-Semitic, with professional men, students, and even schoolchildren as the principal targets. The movement seems to have been largely spontaneous: it was only later that right-wing extremist leaders resorted to more deliberate methods, such as terrorist attacks on persons prominent in the opposition movement. There were a number of instances of official connivance

¹ L. Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia* (New Haven, 1944-51), ii. 78. Details of the pogroms are collated by V. Obninsky in *Polgoda russkoy revolyutsii: sbornik materialov* (M., 1906), pp. 43ff.

in these activities—e.g. in the fabrication and distribution of inflammatory literature. But it is also true that the left-wing parties greatly exaggerated the significance of this factor, partly unconsciously and partly because it suited their purposes to do so. By blurring the distinction between the actual extremist fanatics and their sympathizers in high places, they could bring discredit and suspicion upon everyone in authority, and justify their own endeavours to overthrow the Government by violence. In their propaganda they continually hammered home the argument that the only alternative was between ‘reaction’ and ‘revolution’: force must be met by force.

(Physical intimidation by right-wing extremists encouraged the use of similar strong-arm methods by their opponents on the left. Almost every Party committee now had its ‘fighters’ or militiamen (*boyeviki*), whose chief function was to guard meetings, but who could also be used for offensive action.) At first few people realized that they would soon be called upon to assume an important operational role. They occupied only a minor place in the Party leaders’ or activists’ thinking. The general expectation was that the masses would shortly rise in insurrection; and the immediate objective of the Party was seen as the dissemination of its message to the widest possible audience, in order to prepare the workers for the fulfilment of their historic task. They recognized that the insurrection could come about only if the tens of thousands who had been stirred into action by the October general strike could become accustomed to receiving and acting upon the Party’s instructions. This meant that agitation had to be supplemented by organization. Fortunately for the Social Democrats, in many centres there now existed a mechanism admirably suited to their purpose: the soviets of workers’ deputies.]

The St. Petersburg Soviet was one of the great surprises of 1905—not least for the Social Democrats themselves. Neither Bolsheviks nor Mensheviks had anticipated its emergence or the role it was to play as an embryonic nation-wide stimulus to revolution. This did not prevent claims from being put forward for the honourable title of mid-wife to the new organization.

The Mensheviks could point to *Iskra*’s advocacy of ‘revolutionary self-government’ as implying the necessity for mass organizations of this type. During September some members of their group in St. Petersburg resolved, as they put it, ‘to throw into the masses of the St. Petersburg proletariat the slogan of revolutionary elections’. Their aim was to form ‘workers’ committees’ in each factory and district, as well as in the city as a whole, and then to call a ‘workers’ congress’ on the lines suggested by Axelrod.¹ But the plan seems to have remained

¹ Yevgeniy [Mayevsky], in *Otkliki sovremennosti* (1906), no. 5, p. 4.

on paper until 10 October, when the Mensheviks formally came out in favour of the general strike. They issued simultaneously a call for the institution of an elected 'workers' committee'. On the following day some fifty agitators were dispatched to popularize this idea, which met with an enthusiastic response, and on the 13th some thirty to forty deputies, not all of whom had been formally elected, assembled in the Institute of Technology: this was the first meeting of the Soviet.¹

Seen in isolation this account is somewhat misleading. One significant fact was that the majority of those who attended this gathering were from a single district of the city. Here, in the Neva *rayon*, there existed a particularly vigorous tradition of independent organization that went back to the days of the Shidlovsky commission, or even earlier. In this district, and in some others as well, many of the factory groups formed early in 1905² survived during the months that followed. They engaged in negotiations with the employers and held mass meetings as the need arose. They enjoyed a high reputation among the men, who regarded them as 'their own', implying an organic connexion which a Party committee could rarely, if ever, hope to attain. Some of the 'elders' (*starosty*) who led these groups did maintain unofficial links with the Party: one of them was P. A. Zlydnev, an employee at the Obukhov armaments plant, who later became prominent in the Soviet.³ But as a rule they had no political affiliations, and the main emphasis in their work was on improving economic conditions. They were responsive to the incipient trade-union movement. Among those active in fostering their work was the unrepentantly democratic Akimov. He was present at a number of meetings between representatives of these groups in June and July, at which plans were laid for a city-wide 'workers' congress'.⁴ Another popular figure was G. S. Nosar, a radical lawyer, who under the pseudonym of Khrustalev had been an 'elector' to the Shidlovsky commission; subsequently he had helped the Liberation League to organize the printers' union in the capital, and had also performed a similar function in Moscow.

At a meeting in the Institute of Technology on 12 October [he writes], I outline[d] the history of the September days [in Moscow] and the role played in them by the Moscow Soviet. I call[ed] upon the working masses to hold elections to a Workers' Council of Deputies. The workers

¹ A. Kozlovsky [S. Zborovsky], 'Kak vznik Sovet', in *Istoriya Soveta Rabochikh Deputatov g. Sankt-Peterburga* [hereafter cited as *Istoriya SRD*], pp. 41-42.

² See above, p. 176.

³ P. Kolokolnikov, in *Materialy po istorii professional'nogo dvizheniya* (M., 1924-5), ii. 214-15.

⁴ [V. P. Makhnovets (Akimov)], 'Sovet Rabochikh Deputatov', in *Rabochiy golos* (Spb.), no. 1 (26 November 1905).

of the *Moskovskaya zastava*, who made up most of those present at the meeting, carr[ie]d out elections already on 13 October.¹

This rather vainglorious account was treated with scepticism by the Social Democrats, who claimed all the credit for themselves. But it seems undeniable that the success of the Menshevik appeal of 10 October owed a good deal to the preparatory work done by various individuals and groups on the fringe of the Party, who were held in suspicion by the orthodox on account of their 'bourgeois' leanings. In the last resort, of course, the Soviet derived its impetus, less from the activities of any particular organized political group, than from the general situation: the strikers were themselves well aware of the need for some body through which they could co-ordinate their actions.

The upshot was that the Soviet found itself under Menshevik leadership (if Trotsky could properly be considered a Menshevik). The Bolsheviks' natural reserve towards non-party mass organizations was in this case reinforced by the fact that the Soviet had to all appearances been called by their rivals. The attitude of their local leaders was thus at first extremely negative. Krasikov is said to have warned Bolshevik agitators against 'this new intrigue by the Mensheviks . . . a non-party Zubatovite committee.'² But they could not help noting that the Soviet was daily gaining in strength and prestige, and therefore modified their line to the extent of recommending participation in the election of deputies. They hoped to introduce a number of their own supporters into the Soviet, whom they could then utilize as the situation demanded. As one early Bolshevik historian put it, they participated in its work because

it was necessary to work against the preponderance of the Mensheviks in the Soviet, which was only to be expected in view of the initiative they had taken; for this reason the Bolsheviks decided to capture the Soviet, and to send their own men there, in order to carry on an organized struggle against Menshevik tendencies in general, and in particular against their attempts to turn the Soviet into [an organ of] revolutionary self-government.³

The Mensheviks, characteristically, misjudged their rivals' motives and welcomed their move as a sign that they had undergone a change of heart. Possibly they hoped that they would adopt a more constructive attitude towards the Soviet once they had become more familiar with its work. In any case, they agreed to a Bolshevik suggestion that their

¹ Khrustalev [G. S. Nosar], in *Istoriya SRD* (Spb., 1906), p. 61.

² V. Voytinsky, op. cit., i. 188.

³ E. Krivosheyna, *Peterburgskiy Sovet Rabochikh Deputatov v 1905 g.* (M., 1926), p. 93. This account may admittedly contain an element of *ex post facto* rationalization.

two groups should pursue a common tactical line in the Soviet, and on other matters as well. This enabled the Bolsheviks, who had a majority on the Federal Council (uniting both factional groups in the capital) to force through that body a resolution highly critical of soviets, which were said 'to be liable to hold back the proletariat at a primitive level of development, thereby subordinating it to the bourgeois parties'.¹

Trotsky and his friends did not allow themselves to be unduly embarrassed by this resolution, which they could afford to disregard. They knew that the Soviet was behind them and that the local Bolsheviks were themselves far from united on this issue. In particular, there was a rift between activists and committee-men: the former were anxious on practical grounds to join in the deliberations of this 'labour parliament', while the latter saw it as a threat to the Leninist principle of Party supremacy. Among the protagonists of this 'hard' approach was Bogdanov. As head of the C.C.'s 'Russian Bureau', he was in theory, if not in fact, the leading Bolshevik in Russia at that time. He argued that the Soviet, which included men of varying political views, could easily become the nucleus of an anti-socialist independent workers' party; the Bolsheviks should therefore mobilize their forces within the Soviet and oblige it to accept the Party's programme and the tactical guidance of the Central Committee. If it submitted, then the danger would be averted, since the Soviet could be expected 'ultimately to dissolve in the Party'; if it refused, then the Party's supporters should walk out and 'expose [its] anti-proletarian character before the proletarian masses'. On 29 October B. Knunyants, a leading committee-man, submitted a resolution to the Soviet calling on it 'to declare its political physiognomy'. The deputies' response to this obviously disruptive move was decidedly cool. Trotsky averted an open clash by ensuring that the motion remained on the order-paper without a debate.²

After this setback relations between the Bolsheviks and the Soviet remained somewhat strained. But there was little they could do in practice except carry on some desultory agitation in the factories and write critical commentaries in the press. The author of one of these articles went so far as to suggest that the Soviet should be suppressed unless it accepted the Party's demands.³ However, this was clearly an extreme position. After Lenin's arrival in St. Petersburg, on or about 8 November, the Bolsheviks adopted a more flexible line.

¹ B. N. [ikolaevsky], 'Tsentral'nyy Komitet bol'shevikov o zadachakh partii v oktyabre 1905 g.', in *KiS* (1927), no. 33, p. 26. The document reproduced here is a confidential circular from the C.C. to local committees; so far as is known, not all of these have as yet been published.

² V. Voytinsky, p. 194; *Istoriya SRD*, pp. 150-1; O. Anweiler, op. cit., p. 90.

³ Cited from *Novaya Zhizn'* (No. 7) by Martov in *OD*, iii. 581.

Their leader's initial reactions to the Soviet had been relatively favourable. He went out of his way to endorse the eloquent (if politically questionable) analysis of the current situation given by Trotsky before an enthusiastic crowd on 18 October:

We have been granted freedom of assembly, but our meetings are surrounded by soldiers. We have been granted freedom of speech, but the censorship remains intact. . . . We have been granted inviolability of the person, but the universities are occupied by troops. We have been granted Witte, but Trepov remains. A constitution has been granted—and yet nothing has been granted.¹

He here identified the Soviet with its leaders, whom he saw as determined revolutionaries. A few days later, while in Stockholm *en route* for Russia, he wrote an article criticizing a contributor to the Bolshevik newspaper *Novaya Zhizn'* ('New Life') for his intransigent attitude towards this 'organ of revolutionary power'. He even suggested that the Soviet's composition should be broadened to include representatives of other classes and groups, so that it might become the nucleus of a provisional revolutionary government.² This was an idea he was not to take up again until several months later. Evidently first-hand contact with the Soviet led him to take a sterner view of its potentialities. He did not evidence much interest in the organization after he arrived in the capital: he attended a few meetings of the Executive Committee, and once addressed a plenary session, but that was all. As a Western historian of the soviets points out, Lenin felt out of place in this environment: his natural element was the Party.³ Certainly his main preoccupation at this time was to ensure a predominant position for the Party amidst the prevailing chaos. According to Lyadov, in a private conversation he praised the Moscow Bolsheviks for their efficiency in maintaining their paramountcy over other left-wing organizations, and went on: 'In St. Petersburg things are quite different. Here the Party organization is overshadowed by the Soviet. But the Soviet is just like a talking-shop. They are trying to turn it into a workers' parliament.'⁴

It seems that Lenin's attitude towards the Soviet stiffened as the days passed. In mid-November he could still write that 'we Social Democrats should make sure that the whole Party comes to the aid of the Soviet', which he saw as capable of uniting proletarians and peasants

¹ *Lenin*, viii. 368; L. D. Trotsky, 1905, p. 122. Owing to his isolation from events in Russia Lenin attributed it to the Soviet itself.

² *Lenin, Sochineniya*, 4th ed., x. 3ff. The article was first published in 1940.

³ O. Anweiler, p. 100.

⁴ M. N. Lyadov, *Iz zhizni partii* (M., 1926), p. 109. Lyadov was writing at the height of the Stalin-Trotsky feud, and his testimony on this point is perhaps somewhat suspect. It is not clear what part Lenin's personal relations with Trotsky played in determining his view of the Soviet.

in a struggle 'to carry out the democratic revolution in the most resolute manner'. But by the beginning of December he was equating the non-party attitude of some of the deputies with tacit support of the class enemy: participation in non-party bodies, he explained, was permissible 'only in conditions that are strictly determined and limited . . . solely as an exception.'¹

This was not really very far removed from the ultra-left position originally held by Bogdanov. The difference between them was that, whereas Bogdanov advocated pressure to bring the Soviets into line, Lenin seemed to envisage a situation in which the Party, faced with resistance to its policies, would simply withdraw to a position of splendid isolation. Both men regarded the Soviet as a rival to the Party, and refused to entertain its claim that it represented the interests of 'the revolutionary proletariat': this was a function reserved to the Party alone. They did not issue any call for soviets to be set up in other Russian cities besides St. Petersburg. It was not until the spring of 1906 that Lenin revived his notion that soviets could become 'embryos of revolutionary power'² and declared that in certain conditions the Party should help to establish them. By this time the question was academic, since for some months the soviets had been extinct.

There was thus a striking lack of accord between the Bolsheviks' theoretical approach and the practical policies which they pursued in the Soviet, in company with Mensheviks of varying persuasion. It was left to the latter to attempt some kind of doctrinal justification for their activities. Writing in the Menshevik organ *Nachalo* ('The Beginning'), Martynov pointed out that, although the Soviet was officially a 'non-party' organization, it 'has acted in the spirit of our Party'. He called on Party members to exercise tact and forbearance in their dealings with their less enlightened brethren, and to help democratize the Party so that it could effectively compete with, and ultimately absorb, the Soviet.³ His solution was for a period of co-existence, of unspecified length, during which one partner would penetrate the other and bring about its demise. Akimov took his old colleague to task, pointing out that his plan was 'essentially the same' as that of the Bolsheviks: the only difference was over the timing of the fatal blow.⁴ It could at least be said in Martynov's favour that he envisaged a fundamental regeneration of the Party, whereas Lenin had no sympathy for such 'reformist' ideas. But the important point here is that it was the Mensheviks, not their rivals, who evolved a philosophy relevant to the existing situation

¹ *Lenin*, viii. 394, 416-17.

² *Ibid.*, ix. 45.

³ *Nachalo*, no. 2 (15 November 1905).

⁴ V. P. Makhnovets (Akimov), 'Stroiteli budushchego', in *Obrazovanie* (1907), no. 6, pp. 63, 70.

in the Soviet, where the Party enjoyed a position of predominance it could exploit for its own ends—and it was from this source that Lenin borrowed, without acknowledgement, ideas that were later to prove serviceable in building the ‘Soviet’ Russian State.

The Mensheviks were the first to appreciate that the St. Petersburg Soviet was an amorphous body which lent itself readily to external influence and control. [Delegates to the Soviet were chosen at mass meetings in the factories and saw themselves as responsible to their electors.] At frequent intervals they would return to render account of their actions and acquaint themselves with the mood of the men, which they then endeavoured to reflect in the assembly—even where this obliged them to support some move of which they personally disapproved. This passive attitude on their part made it difficult for the Soviet to follow a consistent policy or take specific initiatives. [It was not in itself a revolutionary body.] Its power was less physical than moral: it depended on the extent to which the delegates remained in close touch with their electors, so that the latter genuinely felt that they represented their aspirations. In theory, any deputy could be relieved of his functions if he forfeited the confidence of his electors, and there were apparently some occasions when this procedure was enforced.¹

There was in general little formality about the Soviet’s manner of conducting business. The members were supposedly chosen on a proportionate basis: one from each factory, or in large enterprises one for every 500 men; small workshops were expected to collaborate in electing a joint representative. But this served only as a general guiding principle. Interest in the Soviet was so widespread that the entitlement was often exceeded, without this arousing the slightest concern. The attendance fluctuated wildly from one session to another according to the state of public opinion, but showed a general tendency to increase. The maximum recorded, late in November, was 562 deputies, representing 181 industrial enterprises and 16 trade unions. The most active were the metallurgical workers, with 351 delegates, while the textile workers had 57 and the printers 32.² [Sessions of the Soviet were also attended by agents of three revolutionary groups (the two Social-Democratic factions and the S.R. party),] who are not included in these figures. Each of these parties was permitted to send ten official representatives, who had consultative voting rights, and twenty-five agitators who had no vote.³ It seems to have been a simple matter for anyone who wished to attend to do so. [The Soviet met in public—] this was regarded by its supporters as one of its principal virtues. Whether these ‘guests’ exerted a significant influence upon uncommitted deputies is none too clear. [Many delegates were, of course, Party members or sympathizers]

¹ *Istoriya SRD* (Spb., 1906), p. 182. ² *Ibid.*, p. 147. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

in the first place—the proportion was put by one of them at two-thirds, although Trotsky gives a lower estimate¹—and their enthusiasm naturally communicated itself to the rest. All that can be said with certainty is that the Party set the tone in the Soviet, and was thereby able to sway a considerable proportion of the working population in the city. Witte wrote later that ‘almost all the workers of St. Petersburg’ accepted its decisions ‘without demur’, and similar statements were also made by some Social Democrats. They have to be treated with reserve. Trotsky himself points out that ‘very large segments of the proletariat’ (builders, servants, unskilled labourers, cab-drivers) were only to a very small extent, or not at all, affected by the Soviet, and estimates that it had organizational links with some 200,000 people, or less than half the city’s total labour force.²

The most important channel through which Party influence made itself felt in the Soviet was by means of its Executive Committee, although this body had less authority than might at first sight be supposed. Observers frequently compared its relationship to the Soviet with that between the executive and legislature in a constitutional state. The parallel is fairly apt. When the Committee first took shape on 17 October it had 31 members: 2 from each of seven city districts, 2 from each of the four largest trade unions, and 3 representatives from each of the left-wing parties.³ Here, as in the assembly, the politicians were given only a consultative vote—but in fact, of course, their greater experience and enthusiasm enhanced their importance. According to D. F. Sverchkov the most important personalities were Trotsky (whom he calls ‘the ideological leader of the Soviet’), Zlydnev, Knunyants, and himself. ‘The chairman of the Soviet, Nosar-Khrustalev,’ he writes, ‘was really something of a “front man” [shirma], for he was incapable of deciding a single question of principle by himself.’⁴ This is a partisan view: Sverchkov was close to Trotsky, who had his own reasons for seeking to discredit Nosar.⁵ Trotsky was undoubtedly the stronger personality, and exerted a good deal of influence upon Nosar. But the latter was a man of energy and enterprise, with plenty of practical common sense. He owed his election as chairman (14 October) partly to his

¹ Ibid., p. 172; L. D. Trotsky, 1905, p. 318.

² L. D. Trotsky, p. 228.

³ *Istoriya SRD*, p. 153. Later, on 19 November, its membership was increased to 50 by the inclusion of representatives of the railwaymen and communications workers; ten days later the number of representatives from the left-wing parties was increased from 9 to 14: 8 Social Democrats, 4 S.R.s, and one member each from the P.P.S. and the Bund (ibid., p. 181; E. Krivosheyna, op. cit., p. 697).

⁴ D. Sverchkov, *Na zare revolyutsii* (Lg., 1925), p. 140.

⁵ B. B. Glinsky, in *Istoricheskii vestnik* (1913), cxxxii. 984ff.; V. A. Kantorovich, ‘Khrustalev-Nosar’, in *Byloye* (1925), no. 32, pp. 117–53; Aksanov, in *1905 g. v ocherkakh i vospominaniyakh uchastnikov* (M., 1927), pp. 25–26; Trotsky, 1905, p. 206.

record and partly to the fact that none of the revolutionary groups was prepared to tolerate a rival in that post. Despite occasional friction with his colleagues he continued to hold office until his arrest on 26 November.

The Executive Committee could influence the proceedings in the Soviet by selecting the topics for debate, which it generally discussed privately beforehand, and by framing the resolutions submitted to the assembly. It also published the Soviet's organ *Izvestiya* ('News'), the first issue of which appeared on 17 October, and was thus able to mould opinion in the sense desired by the Party. But this does not mean that the Soviet was simply a rubber stamp. The agenda included questions that had been considered previously at factory meetings, and although the Executive Committee's resolutions were usually endorsed, this was not invariably the case. The deputies had virtually unlimited freedom of debate. Nosar had truth on his side when he wrote that the Executive Committee gave ideological leadership, but that 'it could not in practice dictate the tactics or set the slogans for the struggle on its own independent responsibility. . . . The Executive Committee proposed, the Soviet discussed and disposed.'¹ The Soviet was not, as the public prosecutor later alleged, a conspiracy. But it did pursue, with an outspokenness that betrayed its immaturity, the goal of insurrection—a goal fixed in advance by the Party.

The history of the St. Petersburg Soviet is of a frontal assault upon the forces of order by a relatively small body of men steeped in the mystique of revolution. Their approach was emotional and romantic; they did not pause to calculate the probable cost of their actions. They were convinced that, to avoid defeat, they must aim for the highest stakes. Often the leaders of the Soviet seemed to advocate a policy largely for its demonstrative effect rather than its feasibility in practice. They soon developed a vastly exaggerated idea of their own strength. Encouraged by their experiences in October, they came to regard strike action as a political weapon designed to prepare the masses psychologically for insurrection, forgetting that, by its very nature, a strike was a double-edged weapon, which could not but alienate public opinion and injure the position of the men involved.² It could be said in their favour that the policy of the Government and employers left them no alternative but to act as they did. But to regard their actions as defensive is to distort the truth. They advocated an extremely militant policy, partly to secure political changes which they sincerely desired, and

¹ *Istoriya SRD*, p. 152.

² It also, of course, wrought damage to the country's economy—but at this time few labour leaders in Russia devoted any thought to this aspect of the problem.

partly because, unless they did so (and provided continuous proof of success), their following was liable to melt away as quickly as it formed.

In practical terms their principal aims were to maintain the impetus of the October strike and to keep the movement oriented towards political goals. These were not easy tasks, for the crowds tended to follow a logic of their own. On 18 October the Soviet, inspired by Trotsky's oratory, vowed to continue the strike, but on the following day was obliged to countermand its decision. It then arranged a demonstrative funeral for some men who had lost their lives in minor street clashes, but had to cancel its plans from fear of a possible *pogrom*. It had better success in persuading newspaper editors to ignore censorship restrictions and to facilitate the publication of *Izvestiya*. The significant point about these moves was that the Soviet's pressure proved most effective when exerted against middle-class elements, rather than against the Government. This was demonstrated even more clearly by the efforts to introduce an eight-hour day. This was the most important action taken by the Soviet, which did much to determine its fate. The campaign began spontaneously in the factories, where the men adopted the simple expedient of ceasing work eight hours after they had reported for duty; on 29 October this 'direct action' was approved by the assembly.

Only the delegate from the Arms Works declares that the introduction of the eight-hour day cannot be the work of the St. Petersburg proletariat alone. But under the influence of the general mood he hastens to state that, if the Soviet orders it, then the eight-hour day will be introduced in his works as well. . . . A deputy in one of the back rows calls out: 'you haven't finished off absolutism, yet you're beginning to fight the capitalists'. His remark is drowned in the general atmosphere of enthusiasm. No one pays any attention.¹

From a Marxist standpoint the campaign was a syndicalist aberration: it made sense only in the perspective of imminent insurrection. But the workers were impatient with theory: they reacted readily to propaganda slogans, which they interpreted in maximalist fashion.

The Soviet leaders were gratified at the men's militancy, but realized that such action was of dubious value to the cause of revolution, since it was bound to isolate the workers from their middle-class allies. The employers responded with wage reductions and threats to close the factories; troops were called in, and meetings forbidden. On 6 November the Soviet adopted a compromise resolution, allowing individual groups of workers to continue the campaign if they wished. It satisfied no one, and the Soviet's authority naturally began to wane. Six days

¹ *Istoriya SRD*, p. 103. On the publication of *Izvestiya*, see A. Simanovsky's account in *ibid.*, pp. 217-42.

later it met again. Only a few desperate souls still wished to continue the fight. After a long and gloomy discussion it was decided to bow to the inevitable: 'it is necessary to cease temporarily the immediate general seizure of the eight-hour working day'.¹ The men were exhausted. The mood of common purpose that had existed in many factories during the October general strike had clearly passed. Partly this was due to the change in the overall political situation; but partly it was the fault of the Soviet leaders, who had attempted to wage war on two fronts at once.

While the campaign against the employers was under way, the Soviet had sanctioned a second offensive against the Government. Towards the end of October further rumours circulated in the city about an imminent *pogrom*, and a few members of the Soviet were set upon by right-wing elements. In several factories the most militant workers began to collect money to buy firearms, and to make crude weapons. The Soviet endorsed these moves and recommended the formation of militia bands—'organized cadres which at a certain moment could assume a leading role in the uprising'.² The fact that no *pogrom* occurred was attributed by the Soviet leaders to their own actions, and encouraged them to make a bid for the support of disaffected troops in the neighbourhood of the city.

On 26 October a mutiny broke out in the garrison at Kronstadt. It was entirely spontaneous in origin, and soon degenerated into a drunken riot. The press reported that the mutineers were to be tried by a court martial which could sentence them to death. On 1 November the Soviet issued a call for a general political strike, to defend the mutineers and also to protest against the recent imposition of martial law in Poland. Trotsky makes it entirely clear that both these issues were but pretexts:

The significance of the November strike, it goes without saying, lies not in the fact that it removed the hangman's noose from the necks of a few dozen sailors—what does this matter in a revolution that has swallowed up tens of thousands of lives? And not in the fact that it compelled the government hastily to liquidate martial law in Poland—what does an additional month of emergency legislation matter to that long-suffering country? . . . The November strike was a call for solidarity, issued by the proletariat over the head of the government and the bourgeois opposition to the prisoners in the barracks.³

Those workers who responded to the Soviet's appeal saw matters in a rather different light. Many of them, it appears, regarded the political issue as subsidiary to their main concern, the struggle for shorter working hours. The stoppage was confined to the St. Petersburg area, work ceased in most factories, and some of the railwaymen joined in, but

¹ *Istoriya SRD*, p. 134; Trotsky, 1905, p. 169.

² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³ L. D. Trotsky, 1905, p. 168.

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shops remained open and urban transport continued to function normally. (By comparison with the first general strike, with its unanimity and enthusiasm, the second was a feeble affair.) On 4 November, when the Executive Committee met, a motion to call off the stoppage was carried by 9 votes to 6. The Party representatives agreed with the minority. Since they lacked full voting rights, their will could not prevail in the Committee; but they exerted such pressure on their colleagues in private that they did not dare present their arguments too vigorously to the Soviet, which rejected the Committee's advice by a majority of 400 votes to 4.¹ This turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory: on the following day the Soviet met again and reversed its decision. By this time the Government had yielded on both the issues with which the strike was nominally concerned. Party agitators could present this as a success for the Soviet. But it was one bought at heavy cost: a widening breach between radicals and moderates; differences between Party and non-party members of the Executive Committee; and a further decline in the Soviet's prestige in the eyes of the average worker.

The leaders endeavoured to meet the threat of defeat by extending the scope of their ambitions. The Soviet (was to become a centre for organizing insurrection in the country as a whole, not only in St. Petersburg. It was to promote the formation of soviets in other cities and co-ordinate their activities by convoking a nation-wide congress of soviets.) The idea was not an original one: early in October trade unionists meeting in Moscow had decided, under Menshevik pressure, to call a congress of labour organizations from all parts of the country.² On 10 November, five days before this gathering was due to be held, the Executive Committee requested its postponement. They explained that the recent strikes had prevented them making proper preparations to attend.³ The real reason was that they wished to call the congress under their own auspices, in the hope that it would be more militant. The Moscow leaders accepted the excuse, thereby abdicating their responsibilities in favour of Trotsky and his colleagues.

Shortly afterwards two Menshevik members of the Soviet, N. Glebov and S. Zborovsky, were sent to contact various provincial organizations. They travelled together to Moscow, whence Glebov went on to Nizhny Novgorod and Zborovsky to the Ukraine. A Bundist who attended meetings of the Soviet was put in charge of links with the western provinces. These few men could not do much. Nor could rapid results be expected from the attempts belatedly made to secure the collaboration of the railwaymen and telegraphists. The Soviet made a token

¹ *Istoriya SRD*, p. 121.

² A. Kats and Yu. Milonov, op. cit., p. 68; see below, p. 279.

³ *Istoriya SRD*, p. 139.

contribution to the exchequer of the postal workers' union, then holding its inaugural congress in Moscow; meanwhile in St. Petersburg six local post office workers and railwaymen were admitted to the Executive Committee. Characteristically, they were only given consultative votes: doctrinaire prejudice against the 'petty bourgeoisie' died hard. Efforts were also made to establish contact with the peasants. A spokesman of the Peasant Union was invited to address the Soviet, which duly gave this 'representative of the village' a stormy ovation.¹ The more sober heads in the assembly realized that this symbolic gesture merely underlined the fact that the Soviet and its supporters were dangerously isolated.

Meanwhile the Government was preparing for the inevitable showdown. Witte wrote later that he 'never attached any particular significance to the Soviet'.² This was an exaggeration. Nevertheless, it was true that the Soviet was not such an immediate threat to the security of the régime as his enemies on the right and left, for reasons of their own, maintained. He could afford to move cautiously. He calculated that the dissolution of this overtly revolutionary organization would prove easier if it were allowed to dissipate its energies in continuous strikes! It was not until 26 November that the police acted, when they arrested—not the entire Soviet or its Executive Committee—but its nominal head, Nosar.

Contrary to expectations in some quarters, this move produced little more than verbal pyrotechnics. On the following day the Soviet adopted a resolution, drafted by Trotsky, which stated laconically: 'The Soviet . . . is electing a provisional presidium and continuing its preparations for an armed insurrection.'³ This presidium was composed exclusively of Social Democrats (Trotsky, Sverchkov, and Zlydnev)—a point that aroused objections from those who valued the Soviet's formal non-party status. Outwardly, at least, its leaders were still full of confidence. A writer in *Nachalo* affirmed that any repressive measures would encounter stiff resistance from a united front of 'proletarians, peasants, and petty-bourgeois democrats'.⁴ But how was the Party to 'prepare' an insurrection when the workers of the capital, preoccupied with the problem of keeping starvation at bay, were losing all hope in the possibility of victory? One answer to this question was supplied by a man with a curious facility for intervention at critical junctures in the Party's history: Parvus. His study of financial problems had convinced him that after nearly two years of war and civil strife Russia was on the verge of total bankruptcy. He proposed that the population be instructed

¹ E. Krivosheyina, p. 586.

² S. Yu. Witte, *Vospominaniya* (M., 1960), iii. 98.

³ V. Zvezdin [P. A. Zlydnev], in *Istoriya SRD*, p. 172.

⁴ *Nachalo*, no. 13 (29 November 1905).

not to pay taxes, to withdraw their savings deposits, and demand that all monetary transactions be made in gold. Such action, he claimed, would soon bring the fragile Witte régime toppling to the ground. The idea was first put forward, rather hesitantly, in an appeal issued by the Soviet on 23 November, when it had brought a swift denial from Witte that the country's finances were in jeopardy: claims on the banks would be met in full. Although the Government's position was none too sound, Parvus' scheme was wildly unrealistic. Possibly it was not even designed to succeed. Trotsky later claimed that he had had no illusions as to its practicability, and that it was simply an instrument of agitation. However this may be, the Soviet leaders seized on the idea as a desperate expedient. It represented an alternative to strike action, for which the time had passed, and to an insurrection, for which the time had not yet come.

On 2 December several of the city's newspapers carried an appeal, similar to that of 23 November, but worded more resolutely, signed by the Executive Committee and most of the left-wing parties. Witte at once took up the challenge. The offending journals were suppressed. Regulations were issued prohibiting strikes by railwaymen, postal employees, or workers in public utilities. On the following afternoon the Soviet met, for the first time since 27 November. In the Executive Committee the Bolshevik and Menshevik spokesmen both reversed their earlier stand and came out in favour of an immediate general strike, arguing that the Government was losing control of the situation. Trotsky knew this was not the case, and recommended adherence to the policy already agreed. The debate was soon rendered academic by the advent of a messenger with the news that troops were *en route* to arrest the assembly. Trotsky and the other Soviet leaders told the deputies to submit bravely to their fate. Zlydnev records that this announcement led to 'shouts of indignation' from the hall: some were for offering armed resistance. But soldiers were already standing in the doorways, and they had no choice but to obey. About 190 men were arrested, including all the principal leaders.¹

The circumstances of the Soviet's demise reflected the confusion that reigned in the minds of Trotsky and his colleagues. For if they really believed that the Government's measures had placed insurrection on the agenda, it was foolhardy to summon another meeting of the Soviet. This gave the police the opportunity they were waiting for. Witte states in his memoirs that for several days he hesitated to follow up the seizure of Nosar by arresting the entire Soviet, since he feared that, if the police tried to apprehend the deputies individually in their homes, many of them would escape.² The Soviet leaders' action showed

¹ D. Sverchkov, *Na zare revolyutsii*, pp. 169ff.

² S. Yu. Witte, iii. 140.

a praiseworthy desire to preserve democratic forms, but it also revealed that they had become victims of their own propaganda. They believed that the arrest of the deputies would 'serve as a clear call to the entire working class to revolt'.¹ This showed lack of psychological insight. For intellectuals, the Soviet was an agitational weapon; for workers, it was a means of self-expression. More realistic than their leaders, working-class supporters of the organization interpreted its destruction as a major defeat for their cause. When the revolutionary parties, after some delay, called for a third general political strike, the response in St. Petersburg was poor. Only two-thirds of the city's labour force was affected; after four days conditions were back to normal. Professional groups, tradesmen, and even some railwaymen, remained aloof. The police clamped down on labour organizations of every kind, and there were hundreds of arrests. Parvus and a few others who remained at liberty claimed to have inherited the Soviet's authority, but were unable to exercise any real influence.

The collapse of the St. Petersburg Soviet naturally led to recrimination within the Party, and Trotsky received his share of the blame. Its impetuous tactics reflected his own traits of character. Of all the Party leaders he was the only one who could be called a man of action. He was a revolutionary maximalist, ready to advance the cause by every means within his grasp, careless of the possible consequences. He appreciated the element of drama inherent in a conflict such as this, and did not scorn theatrical gestures: they satisfied his romantic temperament and his sense of history. He saw himself as the spiritual heir of the revolutionaries of 1792. To critics who questioned the wisdom of the Soviet's actions he replied: 'Comrades, when the liberal bourgeoisie, as though priding itself on its treachery, asks us: "dare you fight on your own without us? Have you then signed an accord with Victory?"', we will fling into their faces the reply: "No, we have signed an accord with Death!"'² None of the other Party leaders would have expressed himself in such overtly emotional terms. Trotsky embodied most clearly the element of instinctive rebelliousness that lurked in the heart of every Russian Social Democrat, concealed by an intellectual commitment to Marxist logic. It was this sentiment that was largely responsible for such successes as the St. Petersburg Soviet achieved. Trotsky could plausibly claim that they were not surpassed elsewhere in Russia, in cities where more conventionally-minded leaders, whether Bolshevik or Menshevik, were in control of the Party's affairs.

In later years the Moscow insurrection of December 1905 came to occupy an honoured place in Bolshevik revolutionary mythology. It

¹ D. Sverchkov, p. 173.

² L. D. Trotsky, 1905, p. 167.

was the most important contribution that they made to the troubles of that year. In essence it was a struggle, lasting some ten days, between a few hundred militiamen and troops from the local garrison, reinforced by armed police. The scale of the fighting was more modest than is often supposed. Although damaging to the Government's prestige, it had no chance of bringing about its overthrow, and its collapse was followed by a drastic erosion of the gains won by Russian labour during 1905.)

Already during the October general strike there had been a certain amount of violence in the city: the authorities were in a state of confusion, and the activities of some right-wing extremist groups contributed to the tension. Most people in Moscow were by now vaguely sympathetic to 'the revolution', and the general situation was thus highly favourable to the Social Democrats. In their committee it was the Bolsheviks who set the tone. On 18 October they were instrumental in organizing a procession to one of the city's jails, where demands were made for the release of the political prisoners detained there. The prison governor was instructed by his superiors to comply with these requests; and as the men emerged through the gates they were given a rousing welcome by the throng. Two days later the committee followed up this success by arranging a demonstrative funeral for N. E. Bauman, one of their leaders who had been killed by a right-wing terrorist during an earlier march. The police estimated that as many as 30,000 persons took part.¹ 20 October deserved to become a red-letter day in the Bolshevik calendar: for the first time they could claim to have dominated the political scene in the country's second most important city. But it was doubtful whether more than a fraction of the marchers were demonstrating their respect for Bauman or his party. Most of them were simply expressing their hopes for a radical change in their way of life, and did not consider themselves pledged to follow the Bolsheviks along the road of insurrection. For their part the local Party leaders realized that, before they could think of an uprising, it was necessary to consolidate their own organization and dissociate themselves clearly from the more moderate elements.

At this time the Moscow committee consisted of some fifteen persons—too many to provide effective leadership.² An inner nucleus was

¹ *DiM*, iv (i). 469.

² For lists of those involved, see M. N. Lyadov, op. cit., p. 92; Ts. Zelikson-Bobrovskaya, *Zapiski ryadovogo podpol'shchika* (M., 1924), p. 104; A. V. Shestakov, in *Put' k oktyabryu*, ed. S. Chernomordik (1923), iii. 19; M. Vladimirsky, in *Dekabr'skoye vosstanie v Moskve 1905 g.*, ed. N. Ovsyannikov (M., 1919), p. 41. These do not all tally, since the committee included district representatives whose identity was not known to everyone present. A Soviet historian (I. F. Ugarov, in *Voprosy istorii* (1955), no. 10, p. 14) puts the membership at twenty to twenty-five.

therefore formed, comprising three intellectuals: Lyadov, M. I. Vasilyev-Yuzhin, and V. L. Shantser (Marat). As his choice of pseudonym suggests, Shantser was a colourful personality. We are told that he went about his business carrying two revolvers in his belt, but that he was honest and tactful in his dealings with his Party comrades.¹ There also existed a Federal Council, on which the local Mensheviks were represented; but this exercised no real influence, and factional differences were no impediment to Bolshevik control. Sub-committees existed in seven districts of the city. Some of them were of little importance, but others became genuine centres of attraction for workers living in the neighbourhood. These district headquarters, like that of the committee itself, were usually situated in schools. One such establishment, run by a Protestant church mission, served as a base for the Party's militia bands. Its director, I. I. Fiedler, was a revolutionary sympathizer. Here it was possible, not only to hold meetings, but even to engage in revolver practice without arousing the suspicions of the police.

[The militia was organized for the most part on a factory basis,] although some of the principal groups, consisting largely of intellectuals, were attached to the committees. The most reliable accounts put the number of militiamen in the city on the eve of the insurrection at approximately 1,000; the higher figures often encountered should be treated with reserve.² Several employers were induced to give considerable sums for the purchase of arms, but the weapons at the disposal of these bands were inadequate in quantity and quality. Relatively few were obtained through Party channels: the bombs and grenades fashioned under Bolshevik auspices were concentrated in St. Petersburg, and when the Moscow rising began there were no more than twenty makeshift devices in the latter city.³ Each militia unit consisted of about a dozen men who expressed their willingness to serve under a particular chief. There was no proper system of organization or command. Early in December a representative 'coalition council of militia units' was set up, but it seems to have been a mere fiction.

This was undoubtedly the most important aspect of the Moscow committee's activities after October—although the normal work of propaganda and agitation continued to be carried on. Public meetings were held; two local newspapers were produced; and contact was maintained with rebellious elements in the garrison. By and large Party

¹ M. N. Lyadov, pp. 90, 135.

² P. A. Garvi, *Vospominaniya sotsial-demokrata* (N.Y., 1946), p. 639; *Moskva v dekabre 1905 g.*, ed. P. V. Kokhmansky (M., 1906), p. 164; V. Taratuta, in *Krasnaya Presnya v 1905-17 gg.* (M., 1930), p. 44.

³ S. M. Pozner (ed.), 1905: *Boyevalaya gruppa pri TsK RSDRP(b) 1905-7 gg.* (M.-Lg., 1927), p. 152.

activities here were more conspiratorial in character than was the case in St. Petersburg—a fact underlined by the absence, until late in November, of any representative body equivalent to the St. Petersburg Soviet. The Bolsheviks were confident that their own organization was strong enough to control the masses without the aid of any intermediary. In this attitude they were confirmed by their hostility towards the non-party strike committee which came into existence during the October days. When direct efforts to disrupt this body failed, the Bolsheviks began to look more favourably on the idea of forming a soviet, which they hoped would act as a magnet, drawing the proletarian elements away from their bourgeois leaders.¹ Since the workers themselves began to display some interest in such an assembly, the Bolsheviks could mask their intentions in democratic phraseology. The Soviet's first meeting, held on 22 November, was attended by Zborovsky, the emissary from St. Petersburg, and it is to him that we are indebted for our knowledge of the manœuvres leading to its inception.² An Executive Committee was elected, comprising 2 Bolsheviks, 2 Mensheviks, 2 S.R.s, and 8 district representatives. All the latter were Social Democrats, although most deputies to the Soviet had no Party ties. This committee was something of a fiction, since in practice important decisions were taken by a caucus to which the six party representatives alone belonged.³ At the second meeting of the Soviet (27 November), attended by only 20 delegates as opposed to the 145 present on the first occasion, a rule was passed to the effect that members of the Soviet were henceforth to be elected indirectly through district soviets. The reason given for this was that industrial enterprises in Moscow were smaller by comparison with those in St. Petersburg, where a system of direct election had been adopted. Whether this was the real motive or not, the effect of the measure was to make the Moscow Soviet less responsive to pressure from below and more amenable to external control than was the case with its more famous namesake. It never really came to life. Only four meetings were held prior to the insurrection, and the police remained unaware of its existence. One prominent local Bolshevik later observed that it 'did not exert any strong independent influence on the movement in Moscow. Its influence and activity in

¹ As Vasilyev writes frankly: 'When we realized that the Strike Committee had no desire to liquidate itself, or to emancipate from its influence the workers who had come under its sway, we redoubled our agitation among the workers, calling on them to withdraw their representatives from the Committee and to link up with the Soviet we were forming' (*PR* (1925), no. 39, p. 96).

² See his letter, in N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 217-18.

³ *PR* (1925), no. 39, p. 101. These were Shantser and Vasilyev for the Bolsheviks, I. A. Isuv and one other unidentified Menshevik, and the S.R.s V. V. Rudnev and V. M. Zenzinov.

fact merely reflected the influence and activity of the Federal Committee of revolutionary parties in Moscow'¹—or rather, the all-Bolshevik Moscow Committee. It was in fact a means whereby the latter disguised its authority behind a representative façade. This point deserves to be emphasized for two reasons: because a legend later grew up to the effect that the insurrection was the work of the Soviet; and because it was the Moscow, rather than the St. Petersburg, Soviet which served as a model for the soviets eventually set up in Russia after the Bolsheviks came to power.

Although the whole activity of the Moscow Party organization was keyed to the prospect of insurrection, few Bolsheviks expected events to develop at the pace they did. On 3 December, when the St. Petersburg Soviet was facing extinction, the authorities in Moscow were confronted with open mutiny in one of the regiments stationed in the city. The rebel soldiers seized weapons and ammunition, arrested some of their officers, and set up a committee to formulate their demands. A long list of grievances was presented to the commanding officer, who promised to consider it; meanwhile at headquarters plans were worked out to restore discipline by force. The men sought to keep violence to a minimum, lest this should compromise their chances of success. They had no clear idea what their next step should be, and soon their morale began to crack. The ringleaders fled, and on the morning of 4 December the others submitted meekly to their officers.²

The episode was typical of the disturbances that broke out at this time in a number of military and naval units, which encouraged Social Democrats to hope that the insurrection they were preparing would be brought to a successful conclusion by the intervention of mutinous troops on their behalf. The Party committee in Moscow was in contact with the regiment chiefly concerned in this outbreak, the Rostov grenadiers. On 2 December it was meeting to discuss—of all things—Lenin's latest proposal to revise the Party's agrarian programme when the 'military organizer' burst in with news of the mutiny. Vasilyev claims that he urged the committee to assume control of the rising, and lead the troops in seizing strategic points in the city. Most of his colleagues opposed this idea as 'adventuristic'—which indeed it was, since no plans had been made for such an eventuality as this. By 20 votes to 7 the committee endorsed Shantser's resolution to inform the C.C. in St. Petersburg of the mutiny and await instructions; meanwhile agitators were sent to the barracks to restrain the men from premature action. This decision, though justifiable on tactical grounds, put an end to any hopes that the mutineers might follow the committee's

¹ V. Taratuta, p. 34.

² 1905: *armiya v pervoy revolyutsii* (M.-Lg., 1927), pp. 127–61.

lead. Its emissaries were heard attentively, but much of their propaganda missed its mark. They were unable to give the rebels any practical advice.¹

The collapse of the mutiny might have been expected to induce a mood of caution among the Moscow Party leaders. If anything, the reverse was the case. It was widely believed that the whole garrison was rife with disaffection. The withdrawal of several units from the city after the suppression of the mutiny lent support to this view. An insurrection, it seemed, might stand a good chance of success. It was in this defiant mood that I. A. Sammer found the Moscow leaders when he arrived from St. Petersburg on 4 December with news of the Soviet's arrest. He reported first to the Bolshevik inner caucus. It is not clear who was present at this meeting or what was said there. According to Lyadov, Sammer assured them that the call for another general strike would meet with an enthusiastic response in the capital.² According to Vasilyev, Sammer warned them that the St. Petersburg workers were exhausted and would probably be unable to render Moscow any aid if they staged an insurrection.³ A leading militiaman, Z. Dosser, relates that Sammer actually passed on a Central Committee directive to launch an insurrection, which led to 'much conflict and division of opinion . . . [since] we had doubts about our strength and the masses' readiness for a decisive struggle.'⁴ Dosser's account is strongly contested by Vasilyev, probably with good reason. In any case, it was decided that the issue should be referred to a special conference of Bolshevik supporters drawn from all over the city. No one seems to have given any thought to the possibility that such a meeting might enable the police to round up the entire Party *élite*; and as it turned out this contempt for the efficiency of the security services was quite merited!

That evening there was a meeting of the Soviet. When the deputies learned of the news from St. Petersburg they indignantly called for an immediate general strike: 'We can wait no longer; we have been gathering our strength for long enough.' However, Shantser and Vasilyev urged them to wait until the question had been discussed at factory level—which in practice meant delaying until the Bolsheviks had held their conference. Dutifully the Soviet complied. The 'Financial Manifesto' was endorsed and measures taken to disseminate it throughout the city. One other significant decision was taken: to enlarge the composition of the Soviet by admitting sixty 'guests': twenty from

¹ M. Vasilyev-Yuzhin, in *PR* (1925), no. 39, pp. 114-20.

² M. N. Lyadov, p. 123.

³ *PR* (1925), no. 40, p. 98.

⁴ *Krasnaya Presnya v 1905-17 gg.* (M., 1930), p. 19. (Dosser's account was written in 1920.)

each of the two Social-Democratic factions and from the S.R.s. The latter protested at this crude effort to weight the body in favour of their rivals, but only seven votes were cast against the proposal.¹

The following day was a Sunday. In the evening several hundred Bolsheviks gathered at the Protestant church school for their decisive conference, which lasted until the early hours of the morning. It opened with a warning by Shantser as to the gravity of the occasion. This, he declared, was no time for them 'to agitate one another' with revolutionary grandiloquence; speeches should be to the point; the committee-men would remain silent until the district and factory representatives had spoken.

The latter are then broken up into groups and arranged by districts. They are interrogated for several hours. Extreme tension in the hall: one can sense one's neighbour holding his breath. 'Our workers are racing into battle, but have no arms.' 'Our workers will act themselves unless the committee calls them out.' 'Our factory has a dozen revolvers.' 'Our workers are forging daggers and lances—we can't hold them back.' Then the military organizer appears. He is pale, and is clearly excited. He says that in Moscow the soldiers, even the cossacks and officers, will refuse to fire at the people. The army is in uproar. The soldiers are ready to come over to the people's side, but their rifles have been taken away. Two speeches, one for and one against. A vote is taken. A forest of arms goes up in favour. The question is decided.²

This account conveys something of the atmosphere at the meeting, but is none too accurate. According to other reports the 'military organizer' warned his listeners that it was uncertain whether the troops would in fact support an insurrection. A note of caution was also struck by Zemlyachka, who pointed out that the committee's contacts with dissident elements in the army were sporadic and unreliable; that it had only a few weapons at its disposal; and that Moscow was virtually isolated from other centres. But these arguments, as she wrote later, 'bounced back like peas off a wall'.³ The head of the Party militia, Ye. Kudryavtsev, also opposed the rising.⁴ The turning-point in the debate was the arrival of a messenger from a congress of railwaymen's delegates. The latter promised to support the insurrection, if one were called by the Soviet, by ceasing work at noon on 7 December. The Bolshevik conference thereupon approved the motion before it, and decided that the intervening day, a public holiday, should be devoted to mass meetings in the factories.

The Party leaders were throughout concerned to give the impression that the decision to rise was a spontaneous expression of the popular

¹ *PR* (1925), no. 40, p. 92.

² N. Norov, in N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), p. 18.

³ Ts. Zelikson-Bobrovskaya, p. 110; M. N. Lyadov, p. 126.

⁴ M. Vladimirsky, in N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), p. 42.

will. The truth was rather more complex. In the first place the delegates to the Bolshevik conference were Party activists; where they had been elected, it was by acclamation, not by ballot. They were naturally inclined to exaggerate the extent of their influence and found it difficult to give an objective appraisal of the actual situation in the factories. Moreover, the workers' mood was itself largely the product of their own feverish propaganda. Even the railwaymen's decision, it seems, was to some extent a fiction, since it was brought about by Bolshevik pressure: their agitators gave them the impression that the factory workers were about to rise in any case, and appealed to them not to betray them.¹ Thus each conference obtained a distorted idea of the intentions of the other. Finally, an elaborate system of interlocking organizations was established to ensure that the insurrection was carried out under Bolshevik control.²

Meanwhile the Mensheviks had conferred with their own supporters (also on 5 December), and had decided to back the rising. The only difference between them and the Bolsheviks was a semantic one. An overt summons to revolt, they felt, was likely to misfire. They recommended calling for 'a general political strike which should transform itself into an armed uprising'. This formula was accepted by the Bolsheviks and subsequently endorsed by the Soviet. Zemlyachka later claimed that long debates took place in the Federal Committee between spokesmen of the two rival factions as to the desirability of an insurrection.³ There is no evidence to support this contention, which may be designed to deflect attention from her own rather ambiguous record on this question. In later Soviet historiography much has been made of the alleged reluctance, or even refusal, of the Mensheviks to take the road of insurrection, as proof of their inherently 'counter-revolutionary' nature. These charges have no substance in

¹ P. V. Kokhmansky (ed.), p. 10; V. N. Perevertsev, op. cit., p. 62.

² For details, see M. Vasilyev-Yuzhin, in *PR* (1925), no. 40, pp. 104ff., who may be exaggerating their intricacy. The Federal Committee (or Council) of the Party 'decided that formally the leadership should be entrusted to the Executive Committee of the Soviet, but that in reality it should be concentrated in the hands of the Federal Committee'—i.e. in the hands of its leading *troyka*. Both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks sought to conceal this fact behind a façade of multi-party representation. The Mensheviks suggested setting up an Information Bureau consisting of 4 members of the Federal Committee, 2 S.R.s, and 1 railwayman. But this still left open the possibility that if one of the Social Democrats were to be incapacitated the S.R.s might gain 'excessive influence'. It was therefore decided, at Vasilyev's suggestion, to admit to the Information Bureau two representatives from the Soviet Executive Committee, one Bolshevik and one Menshevik. 'These were the diplomatic ingenuities', he comments, 'to which we were compelled to resort by the much-vaunted coalition tactics'. In practice these elaborate precautions proved superfluous, and the Information Bureau played a negligible role in the insurrection.

³ Zemlyachka [R. S. Zalkind], in N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), p. 23.

fact. Nor has the claim of the Menshevik P. A. Garvi that his group carried on 'a stubborn struggle against the Moscow Bolsheviks both in the Federal Council and the Soviet'.¹ In reality the two wings of the Party were in close agreement that—to use Garvi's own words—'the tsarist government was deliberately provoking the working class, . . . and that we had to carry out the decision of the men in St. Petersburg with all the resolution we could muster.'

At noon on 6 December the Soviet convened once again. 120 delegates from 91 factories attended, as well as representatives of the railwaymen and postal workers. Most accounts say that at this meeting, as at the Bolshevik conference on the previous day, the floor was given over to the spokesmen of the masses. But according to one reliable source the gathering was first addressed by the editor of the Bolshevik paper *Bor'ba* ('Struggle'), Steklov, who assured the throng that the forthcoming strike would embrace the entire nation.² By this time the mood in the factories had been further heated by agitation. The composition of the Soviet was in any case such that there could be no doubt about the outcome of its deliberations. All the voices from the floor clamoured for immediate insurrection. In accordance with the Bolsheviks' plans, leadership of the rising was entrusted to a twenty-four-man body, comprising twenty members of the Executive Committee and one representative from each of the left-wing groups. The S.R.s and railwaymen made a last-ditch effort to frustrate this plan. They proposed a 'Coalition Council' consisting of two members nominated by the Executive Committee, the three parties, and the railwaymen. This arrangement would still have left the Social Democrats a working majority, but they saw to it that it was turned down. (Only in one Menshevik account of this meeting do we find an admission that such an alternative existed.)³ The deputies then settled various practical details and adopted a flamboyant appeal for popular support: 'The revolutionary proletariat can no longer tolerate the misdeeds and crimes of the tsarist administration and declares resolute and merciless war upon it. . . . Boldly into the fray, comrade workers, soldiers, and citizens! Down with the criminal tsarist government!'⁴

It seems unlikely that the organizers of the insurrection actually felt the elation expressed in this document. The S.R. leader, Zenzinov, wrote later that 'in the depth of our hearts we were all convinced of the inevitability of defeat'.⁵ One observer present at the railwaymen's meeting on 5 December reported: 'There was no enthusiasm among

¹ P. A. Garvi, op. cit., p. 609.

² N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), p. 223.

³ P. V. Kokhmansky (ed.), p. 140.

⁴ N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), pp. 10-12; reprinted in *DiM*, iv (i). 648-50.

⁵ V. Zenzinov, *Perezhitoye* (N.Y., 1953), p. 225.

those who attended the conference. They were all in a sad and sullen mood: they knew they were submitting to bitter necessity and were going to their unavoidable doom.¹ Both these statements are doubtless coloured by hindsight. But even one of the most militant Bolshevik activists, Z. Litvin (Sedoy), admitted to a certain uneasiness after the decision had been taken, in view of the inadequacy of their preparations. He comforted himself with the thought that no other honourable course of action was open to them: 'the die had been cast'.²

(The Moscow insurrection may be divided into four phases. The first, from 7 to 9 December, was one of gathering momentum. The strike call was heeded fairly generally by the city's industrial population, although some groups of workers were only induced to join in under pressure. In the streets life at first continued more or less normally. In working-class areas there were a few protest marches, which were dispersed without trouble. But under cover of darkness attacks were made on policemen and off-duty military personnel with the object of seizing the weapons they carried. Raids were also made on gunsmiths' shops for the same purpose. On the railways traffic came to a standstill on all lines except that linking the city with St. Petersburg. Already on the morning of 7 December the military authorities sent a detachment of troops to occupy the strategic Nikolayevsky terminal, thereby enabling contact to be maintained with the capital. The other stations were largely under the control of armed railwaymen.

At this point both sides were groping in the dark, ignorant of the strength or intentions of the enemy. No special measures had been taken by the authorities to meet the threat of a strike, although the left-wing parties had given ample notice of their plans. On 7 December the garrison was alerted, and on the 8th Admiral F. V. Dubasov, the new governor-general, declared a state of emergency. The police were permitted to wear civilian clothes and, when this failed to assure them protection against attack, withdrawn from the streets altogether. This move reflected the lack of confidence among those in authority as to their ability to maintain control over the situation. In particular, they considered that there were far too few troops in the city to suppress the revolt promptly. Dubasov bombarded St. Petersburg with requests for reinforcements. In the light of what is now known about the insurgents' strength it seems that he was exaggerating the seriousness of the situation. In addition to over 2,000 regular police and a division of gendarmes there were some 6,000 men under arms in Moscow: 9 infantry regiments, 1 regiment of dragoons, several cossack and engineer units, 2 artillery brigades and 3 machine-gun

¹ P. V. Kokhmansky (ed.): p. 10.

² N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), p. 25.

companies.¹ This was a fairly substantial force, even if some detachments were uncertain in their loyalties. But these men were not deployed to best advantage. The senior military commander in the area reported that only 700 men were available for active patrolling. The remainder were assigned to guard duties at various military and civilian installations.² These 700 men were scattered about the city until 10 December, when they were concentrated near the Kremlin.

The evidence suggests that, if the insurgents had made a sudden determined assault upon the main centres of authority, they could have seized control of the city. But they were as ill-prepared for such action as their adversaries were to resist it. The Moscow committee had made no plans for an insurrection, despite all the emphasis on this in the Party's theoretical literature. Neither Bolsheviks nor Mensheviks knew how the general strike was to 'transform itself' into a popular uprising! According to Vasilyev, when the Federal Council met on the afternoon of 7 December the two Menshevik members sat in silence. Vasilyev himself could do little more than lament the absence of 'a specialist experienced in military affairs'. 'So far as the technique of insurrection was concerned', he wrote later, 'we were all absolute laymen.'³ They decided—at this late stage of events—to ask the S.R.s whether they had any expert who could assist them; in the meantime the militiamen were instructed to continue disarming the police. They do not appear to have considered the possibility of mobilizing the militiamen for offensive action of a more deliberate kind.

Inadequate as was the guidance received by the district Party leaders at the outset of the insurrection, they were soon to receive even less. For on the evening of 7 December several prominent Social Democrats were arrested. Vasilyev and Shantser, two of the most active Bolsheviks, and the chiefs of the Menshevik printers' union, were among those taken. Vasilyev says modestly: 'This inevitably led to a certain disorganization of the leadership.'⁴ In fact it dealt a most grievous blow to the insurgents' hopes, although neither they nor their opponents appreciated this at the time. Ironically enough, the gendarmes who detained them failed to recognize their identity; shortly afterwards an explosion at police headquarters destroyed their documents, and they were treated as run-of-the-mill political offenders. The situation was ironical in more ways than one, since they owed their arrest to their passion for subterfuge. The Social-Democratic leaders came to the rendezvous for a session of the Information Bureau—a body whose

¹ P. V. Kokhmansky (ed.), p. 195.

² G. Kostomarov (ed.), *Iz istorii moskovskogo vooruzhennogo vosstaniya* (M., 1930), p. 39; N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), p. 173.

³ *PR* (1925), no. 40, p. 110.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

mixed composition, as we have seen, aroused their misgivings. When the meeting was over its Party members remained behind to discuss matters in the intimacy of their own caucus. It was at this moment that the police burst in.¹

This setback was probably of greater significance than the simultaneous (and widely publicized) escape of a large number of activists and militiamen from a police ambush in the Aquarium Theatre. The wanted men succeeded in making their way unobserved into an adjoining building, where they sheltered for several hours until police patrols were withdrawn.² Both these incidents show clearly enough that, even in this phase of the insurrection, when the insurgents still had the advantage of surprise, it could scarcely be said that the initiative lay in their hands. This was confirmed by the 'siege' of the Protestant church school on the following evening. The building was surrounded by troops and shelled; the defenders replied with rifle-fire and grenades. Four soldiers were wounded, one fatally. On the rebel side the number of casualties was put at 3 killed and 15 injured.³

It was rare for artillery to be used to quell a civil disturbance. Moscow, at any rate, had not heard a cannon fired in anger since 1812. The incident made a considerable impression, and helped to win the insurgents a modicum of public support. It was now that the first barricades appeared, and the insurrection entered upon its second, and most critical, phase.

On 10 and 11 December it could truly be said that the outcome of the struggle hung in the balance. The militia bands applied partisan warfare tactics, which allowed them to use their small numbers to best effect. The soldiers were becoming tired and frustrated by frequent inconclusive engagements with an elusive foe. The war was over, and they were reluctant to risk their lives against a domestic enemy whose identity was far from clear. Their officers were also unwilling to act too impetuously lest they place too great a strain on their men's morale. There was a possibility that, where the troops were exposed for too long to contact with hostile civilians, they might desert, and then find themselves drawn into the conflict on the rebel side.

The appearance of barricades in the streets of Moscow surprised even the most ardent revolutionaries. For those brought up in the traditions of the intelligentsia the barricade had a symbolic significance.

¹ *Moskovskkiye pechatniki v 1905 g.* (M., 1924), p. 78.

² For descriptions of this affair, see M. N. Lyadov, op. cit., p. 130; V. Zen-zinov, p. 237; Z. Litvin (Sedoy) in *Krasnaya Presnya* . . . , p. 89. The military authorities later protested to the Ministry of War at the 'incomprehensible vacillation' of the *okhrana* agents responsible for their escape (G. Kostomarov (ed.), p. 38).

³ N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), pp. 158ff.; Fiedler himself was among the casualties.

It conjured up mental images of Paris in 1848 or 1871. In Moscow, however, the obstructions erected across the thoroughfares could not be manned by their defenders—partly because of the extreme cold (the thermometer registered eighteen degrees of frost) and partly because the insurgents lacked sufficient strength! Members of the public were willing to aid them in constructing the barricades, supplying food and shelter, or tending their wounded. But this was not synonymous with active participation in the fighting. The insurrection was the work of the militiamen, not of the populace as a whole./

While the troops patrolled the city from their camp near the Kremlin, and attempted to flush out snipers who attacked them, the Party leaders sought to cover the entire city with small groups of marksmen./ Instructions printed in *Izvestiya* recommended, among other measures, concentration of fire on officers and cossacks in preference to ordinary policemen or soldiers. Belated practical advice of this kind could not compensate for the lack of effective leadership./ Lyadov, the surviving member of the Bolshevik triumvirate, spent these two days wandering aimlessly through the streets. He had no headquarters from which to transmit orders to the militia groups in the districts, which acted as their leaders or members thought fit./ They had little sense of discipline, and their lack of training showed itself in poor marksmanship. It was soon evident that their revolvers were of little use against distant targets, and they had few weapons of larger calibre. They could only harass the troops and undermine their morale; they could not defeat them in direct engagements.

[For these reasons the third phase of the insurrection, from 12 to 15 December, witnessed its liquidation./ Some Party leaders still wished to fight on to the bitter end; others felt there was no alternative but to cut their losses and withdraw in the most orderly manner possible. On the 14th the Bolshevik committee met, for the first time since the uprising began, and adopted a resolution in the former sense. The Mensheviks had already decided that 'the weakening spirit of the masses' made it necessary to terminate the action. At their prompting a plenary session of the Soviet was arranged for 15 December. Some ninety delegates attended. The news they gave was bleak enough, yet most of them contrived to remain optimistic, and the Bolsheviks carried the day. The Mensheviks present, afraid to tarnish their revolutionary reputation, did not vote against their motion. But later that evening they repented of their weakness and again reversed their stand. A head-on collision between the two factions was averted, since by the next day the Bolsheviks had also lost heart. They decided that resistance should cease on 19 December.¹

¹ P. V. Kokhmansky (ed.), p. 148.

These manœuvres had little effect upon the actual course of the fighting, since the leaders had long since lost control of events. Sympathy for the insurgents waned as it became apparent that the enterprise had no chance of success. Thousands of working-class families left the city to seek safety in outlying villages.

On the 13th and 14th [one activist records], one could detect a certain hostility towards the militiamen among the general public. With increasing frequency people tore down the barricades. On the morning of the 14th the local inhabitants started to demolish the obstacle outside the 'Dukat' tobacco factory, and we had to stop them by force. By this time the militia bands themselves were beginning to melt away.¹

The shooting along the outer ring of boulevards died down, and in the centre of the city conditions returned more or less to normal; most of the railway stations were occupied by troops. On the evening of the 15th the garrison received a welcome reinforcement from St. Petersburg in the shape of the *élite* Semyonov guards regiment. Dubasov's pleas had finally taken effect. In the literature on the subject the arrival of the 'Semyonovtsy' is almost invariably depicted as the event that turned the scales against the rebels, the implication being that, if use of the railway-line had been denied to the Government, the insurrection might have succeeded. Actually its fate had already been sealed three days earlier. The fact that the reinforcements were not of decisive importance is borne out by the immediate dispatch of some of the fresh troops to the suburbs, where they took stern reprisals on railwaymen who had supported the insurrection. The remainder settled down to the siege of Presnya.

'Red Presnya', as it is called today in honour of its role in 1905, was a working-class district in the west of the city, situated on hilly ground overlooking the river Moskva. It contained several important textile mills and other plants (among them a furniture factory owned by N. P. Schmidt, a nephew of Savva Morozov and a Bolshevik sympathizer). The inhabitants of this district had recently acquired a reputation for extreme militancy—largely as a result of Populist, not Social-Democratic, agitation.² Many of the 300 militiamen in Presnya left the district to fight in other quarters of the city when the insurrection began. On 11 December, when the first barricades went up, effective authority passed into the hands of two men: Litvin (Sedoy)

¹ *Krasnaya Presnya* . . . , p. 243.

² One Bolshevik writer refers to Presnya as 'an S.R. nest', and another states that prior to the insurrection his faction had only a single propaganda circle in this district, with two or three members (Sedoy in N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), p. 25; Dosser, in *Krasnaya Presnya* . . . , p. 28). Dosser is perhaps inclined to understate Bolshevik strength, but his evidence provides a corrective to the canonical view.

and an S.R. who bore the pseudonym 'Medved' ('The Bear'). Their régime gave a grim foretaste of things to come. Sedoy was a brutal individual who did not shrink from personally executing his enemies.¹ By measures of intimidation and appeals to the workers' revolutionary zeal the rebel leaders succeeded in maintaining their hold over the district while they prepared to defend their miniature citadel against the inevitable counter-attack. Military operations began in earnest on the 16th. Colonel Min, commander of the Semyonov regiment, had some 1,500 men at his disposal. As they entered the area they encountered stiff resistance from the militiamen, but there is little doubt that they could have occupied Presnya within a few hours if they had been determined to do so. The army command, however, was anxious to avoid unnecessary casualties among the troops and had a grossly exaggerated idea of the insurgents' strength. Rumours were current to the effect that one *druzhina* alone was 10,000 strong. At headquarters there was no proper system of intelligence, and at the junior command level confusion was rife. One artillery officer, acting on his own initiative, took his unit to a position west of Presnya and laid down a barrage of 400 shells, some of which fell in the path of the advancing infantry.² On the afternoon of 17 December a delegation of workers approached Colonel Min and appealed for a cease-fire. He handed them an ultimatum to surrender their leaders—unaware that the latter had already made good their escape. The greater part of the guardsmen's inglorious campaign was thus strictly speaking unnecessary.

In official military reports it was later stated that the rebel leaders escaped during the night of 18–19 December.³ Sedoy, however, makes it clear that he gave his men the order to withdraw on the morning of the 17th.

It was obvious to me . . . that we were surrounded. At 9 a.m., to save the lives of the surviving fighters, they were ordered to go to the centre of Presnya, hide their weapons, disguise themselves, and then make their way to their districts. . . . The militiamen got away without any casualties, taking advantage of the fact that up to mid-day some of the escape routes were still open.⁴

Dosser brought his group out on the afternoon of the same day.⁵ The evacuation could be justified on the grounds of expediency, but it

¹ Particularly vicious was his murder of a police officer named Voyloshnikov, who was seized in his apartment, taken out, and promptly shot. His wife was assured by his captors that he would come to no harm, but on the following morning she found his body lying on the doorstep of their home.

² G. Kostomarov (ed.), pp. 78ff.

³ N. Ovsyannikov (ed.), p. 150.

⁴ Ibid., p. 29. This is confirmed by him in *Krasnaya Presnya* . . . , p. 93, where he dates it to 9.30 a.m.

⁵ *Krasnaya Presnya* . . . , p. 30.

could hardly be called heroic. A number of men who had been drawn into the insurrection did not flee, and were left to face the wrath of the incoming troops. Men suspected of instigating the revolt, or who had served on the district soviet, were shot out of hand. The military authorities were concerned with retribution, not justice. Moscow and its environs went through a brief reign of terror. Those whose lives were spared were subjected to arbitrary violence at the hands of the troops and police.¹

The insurrection caused considerable loss of life and damage to property. The army's losses were officially put at 70 killed and wounded and total casualties at 442 killed and 822 wounded.² The latter figures are almost certainly too low. There were 454 more burials in the city's cemeteries in December 1905 than was normal for that month; many more victims were undoubtedly buried secretly, or outside the municipal boundary. The number of dead has been put at nearly 1,000. The overwhelming majority of them seem to have been non-combatant citizens who became involved in the fighting against their will.]

[In many other parts of Russia violent disturbances took place] at this time in which local groups of Social Democrats were often prominently involved. To call these events 'insurrections', as is now conventional in Soviet historiography,³ is somewhat misleading, since only in one or two areas were conscious attempts made to overthrow the local administration and set up a revolutionary authority in its place.] Some account of these developments, and more especially of the role which the Party played in them, needs to be given if events in St. Petersburg and Moscow are to be seen in proportion.

[The most alarming situation,] from the Government's point of view, was that in the Baltic provinces, which in late November and early December were in a state of overt insurrection. Characteristically, the most militant elements were to be found in the countryside, where bands of peasants attacked and plundered estates. The urban workers responded with strikes and demonstrations. The revolt had a nationalistic flavour] that was something of an embarrassment to the Lettish

¹ One police officer who retained his respect for the law wrote privately to a colleague at this time that, 'like the revolutionaries', the troops and police 'have become savages. . . . They beat brutally any militiaman who falls into their hands or is arrested, sometimes even killing them in the process' (M. A. Osorgin, 'Dekabr'skoye vosstanie 1905 g. v Moskve v opisaniy zhandarma', in *Minuvshiye gody* (1917), no. 7-8, p. 359).

² *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1925), no. 11-12, p. 172; *Moskovskoye vooruzhennoye vosstanie po dannym obvinitel'nykh aktov* . . . (M., 1906), p. 24.

³ See the comprehensive survey given by N. N. Yakovlev, *Vooruzhennyye vosstaniya v dekabre 1905 g.* (M., 1957).

Social Democrats, although by adapting their tactics they were able to win a certain amount of rural support. Throughout Poland and the western region there were continual meetings, protest marches, and clashes between gendarmes and militia bands. An important element in the situation in all the national minority areas was that attacks on troops by non-Russian elements tended to reinforce the bonds of army discipline; correspondingly, in ethnically Russian territory a crucial factor was the degree to which the soldiers were reluctant to act violently against their compatriots.

So far as Great Russia was concerned, the most serious disorders occurred at Nizhny Novgorod, where street fighting broke out on 11 December. Several people lost their lives; there was a general work stoppage; strikers occupied the railway stations, and in the industrial suburb of Sormovo barricades were erected in the streets. The rebels followed the lead of the local Party committee which included members of both factions, but had a Bolshevik majority. Similar disturbances took place, but on a less extensive scale, in some other Volga towns, notably Samara and Saratov. At both these places soviets were formed. At Samara the soviet was Bolshevik-controlled, but was less powerful than the non-party strike committee, with which it engaged in a struggle for influence on the pattern of that in Moscow. At Saratov, on the other hand, Social Democrats and S.R.s collaborated to ensure joint domination of the soviet.¹

In the Ukraine the railways came to an almost complete standstill and in many places violent outbreaks occurred. Most of the Party committees were led by Mensheviks. In Kiev and Odessa there was a comparatively feeble response to the call for a general strike. One reason was that the left-wing elements were afraid of a repetition of the recent *pogroms*; another that on 18 November a mutiny had broken out in the Kiev garrison, and this has led to a tightening of security measures in the city. In Odessa a tendency towards anarchism now became apparent, indicating that the revolutionary movement had passed its peak. The general strike, which began on 11 December, was not marked by undue violence. Leadership was concentrated in a representative soviet and a committee embracing the numerous left-wing organizations in the city.² At Yekaterinoslav there was a similar committee in which the Social Democrats had a narrow majority. According to a police source 'revolutionaries terrorized the whole town for almost a week'. Several official buildings were taken over, but the authorities never lost control of the situation. There was no real insur-

¹ *DiM*, iv (ii). 109-40, 695, 753.

² *Letopis' revolyutsii* (1925), no. 11, pp. 91-114; no. 13, pp. 45-53 (Kiev). For Odessa, see *ibid.*, no. 14-15, pp. 149-54.

rection in the town, although in the surrounding area many mines, factories, and railway stations were seized by workers and railwaymen, who offered resistance to the gendarmes when they arrived to restore order.¹

Kharkov seems to have been one of the few places where the Mensheviks pursued a policy distinguishable from that of their rivals. They controlled the Federal Council of the Party, which in the middle of November succeeded in persuading the Town Duma to declare its support for a united left-wing front. When a general strike broke out on 8 December the Bolsheviks urged that it be turned into an insurrection. The Mensheviks, who had good connexions with dissident troops, were anxious to wait until their attitude became clearer, but eventually agreed to fix the rising for 12 December. Before they could move the leaders were arrested. Some 140 militiamen, mainly students, assembled in a factory on the outskirts of the city to keep a late-night rendezvous with the rebel soldiers. But the latter never arrived, and instead the building was surrounded by loyalist forces. After a brief cannonade the insurgents capitulated.²

Somewhat similar was the course of events at Rostov-on-Don. Here, too, the Mensheviks controlled the Party committee, which had considerable influence over the local railwaymen. After their headquarters in the town had been shelled, causing a number of casualties, the more militant elements retired to the suburb of Temernik, which they hoped to use as a base for insurrection. At first they drew encouragement from the fact that for several days no attack was launched upon their redoubt; but when the artillery opened up the rebel leaders fled, after offering only token resistance.³

Rostov transmitted its incendiary impulses to several of the larger centres in the northern Caucasus served by the Vladikavkaz railway, which linked Rostov with Baku. The latter city was now unusually tranquil. There were two reasons for this. One was the success of

¹ *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1935), no. 73, pp. 91-125; *Letopis' revolyutsii* (1923), no. 2, pp. 65-72; (1925), no. 14-15, pp. 226-52; *Voprosy istorii* (1955), no. 12, pp. 19-32.

² 1905 g. v *Khar'kove*, ed. S. Kramer, pp. 222ff., 250ff.; A. S. Shapovalov, op. cit., pp. 191-234; *Letopis' revolyutsii* (1924), no. 6, pp. 119-36, 248ff.; *DiM*, iv (iii). 366ff.

³ 'Al.', 'Stranichka iz istorii dekabr'skikh sobytiy 1905 g.', in *Russkoye bogatstvo* (1908), no. 6, pp. 74-104. The author, an intellectual with Populist sympathies, has left an unflattering picture of the insurgents, whom he refers to as 'a real rabble'. They are said to have had their own 'intelligence squad', consisting of 'cut-throats—mostly Georgians or Ossetians, to judge by their appearance', and a makeshift jail in which one of their number was installed as an *agent provocateur*. For a more complimentary account, see P. Arsky, 1905 god: *literaturno-istoricheskiy sbornik* (Lg., 1925), pp. 189ff., and the official documents in *DiM*, iv (ii). 462ff.

Shendrikov's pro-Menshevik organization in concluding an agreement with the oil companies, as a result of which 'the industry was as though transformed'.¹ The old patriarchal ways were abandoned and the workers allowed to set up autonomous bodies which exercised considerable power. This 'new deal' naturally took some of the ground from beneath the feet of extremist agitators. Another factor was the fear of racial violence, which was especially acute after the calamitous riots that had taken place in August. It was thus not until 14 December that the local soviet succeeded in bringing about a general strike: it lasted eight days, but passed off fairly peacefully.

In Tiflis the Social Democrats were in a stronger position. Indeed, such was their reputation that towards the end of November, when the viceroy became concerned at the possibility of a *pogrom* in the city, he called on the Social-Democratic committee to aid the authorities in averting it. Several hundred rifles were handed over, on the understanding that they would be returned once the situation had calmed down.² This curious partnership was inevitably of brief duration. On 10 December the leaders of the principal left-wing organizations proclaimed a general strike, which was partially obeyed. Eight days passed before the army seized the initiative and launched an assault upon the suburb of Nakhalovka, the revolutionaries' principal stronghold. A few days later there was further violence in Tiflis itself, when cossacks retaliated to a bomb attack by shooting indiscriminately at crowds in the streets. The Party committee called for an uprising, but to little effect. The Bolsheviks later blamed its leaders for failing to devote due attention to work among the troops; but the harsh reality was that the semi-colonial character of the struggle in this region limited the opportunities for successful agitation within the army.³

The strength of the Georgian Mensheviks lay in the fact that they could appeal, not only to the urban workers, but to the middle class and peasants. Their control over Guria and neighbouring areas was as effective as ever: at the end of 1905 Durnovo estimated the strength of the insurgent militia in this region at 20,000.⁴ But the very extent of their success raised awkward problems. Their popularity rested on their prowess as militant revolutionaries; but for some months past they had in effect been performing governmental functions. The move-

¹ Yu. Larin, *Rabochiye neft'yanogo dela* (M., 1909), p. 36.

² Garvi MSS., Russian Archive, New York; K. Ponomarev, in *Obrazovanie* (1906), no. 3. The bargain was not kept—to the embarrassment of I. Ramishvili, of the Menshevik committee, who had entered into it on his colleagues' behalf.

³ F. E. Makharadze and G. V. Khachapuridze, *Ocherki po istorii rabochego i krest'yanskogo dvizheniya v Gruzii* (M., 1932), p. 193; *DiM*, iv (iii). 855–60, 872–3.

⁴ *DiM*, iv (iii). 702.

ment was losing its *élan*. Some leaders were anxious to maintain it by expanding the area of their authority; but this was more easily said than done. Others advocated abandoning the struggle, since it seemed to have achieved all that could have been hoped in the absence of support from other parts of the country. At a conference in November a compromise resolution was adopted which satisfied neither side.¹ Shortly afterwards a strong military punitive expedition arrived in the area. Its chief, General Alikhanov, did not shrink from burning down villages that refused to hand over the rebel leaders. As his grim cavalcade passed through the area railway and telegraph connexions, which had been interrupted by acts of sabotage, were slowly restored and officials began to return to their posts.

While the Social Democrats of Transcaucasia could derive political capital from national grievances, their colleagues in Siberia were endeavouring to master a still more potent source of energy: the demoralized Manchurian Army. Defeat undermined the men's confidence in their officers. The October Manifesto also helped to weaken discipline, since the soldiers generally obtained only a vague and distorted idea of its provisions through unofficial channels. In many units committees were set up to assert what the men believed were their new rights as citizens. Democratic officers' organizations were also formed. None of these bodies had any legal status, but even conservative-minded senior officers were obliged to tolerate them: their authority was visibly melting, and they had to play for time.

The main thought in the soldiers' minds was to return to European Russia as quickly as possible. Many of them had been cut off from their homes for months; and since there was no effective system for the relief of their families, they were understandably concerned for their well-being. They also had more immediate grievances: lack of food and clothing; poor medical services and accommodation; brutal treatment by some of their superior officers; and above all administrative inefficiency, made worse by blatant corruption. The demobilization arrangements were often disgracefully unfair.

(In such circumstances it might have seemed an easy task for professional revolutionaries to divert this widespread discontent along paths of their own choosing.) But from the Social Democrats' point of view [the situation, although generally promising, had a number of disadvantages. In the first place, the soldiers' animosity was directed specifically against the military authorities, and they were not too concerned with broad political or economic questions.] Their indignation could on occasion express itself in a form that was anything but acceptable to the left-wing groups—as, for example, in the anti-Chinese

¹ Uratadze MSS., Russian Archive, New York.

pogrom in Vladivostok on 30 October.¹ In the second place, the soldiers' effectiveness as a revolutionary force inevitably waned proportionately to the satisfaction of their main grievance: the slowness of demobilization. An added complication was that they were none too well-disposed towards strike action by the railwaymen, which delayed their departure for home. Conservative-minded officers naturally sought to make the most of this conflict of interest, while the left-wing groups, for their part, preached the virtues of social solidarity. The railwaymen agreed to facilitate the passage of returning troop trains. They claimed that the service functioned more smoothly on the sections of line under their control than on those managed by the army authorities—which was sometimes true and sometimes untrue. In general the Social Democrats had a fair degree of success in putting over their arguments, but it was no easy task to reconcile the two forces to which they principally looked for support.

For in Siberia there was as yet no significant contingent of industrial workers, and this was another major weakness in the Party's position. It was to some extent offset by the radicalism of the local intelligentsia (a product of the exile system). Finally, there were geographic and economic considerations. The vast distances affected both sides impartially. On one hand, it was hard for the revolutionary committees to maintain contact with one another, so that each major centre was virtually the capital of an independent state. On the other hand, the central Government was hindered from dispatching reinforcements promptly. The fact that eastern Siberia was largely dependent on imports for foodstuffs and other commodities meant that, in addition to their other problems, the local revolutionary régimes were faced with a severe supply crisis. All these factors combined to limit the success of insurrectionary efforts in this part of the country.

During the last months of the war the Party's Siberian Union expanded its influence very considerably, in particular among the railwaymen. It had committees in all the principal towns and a number of smaller centres as well. Almost without exception they were Menshevik-controlled. Their radicalism tended to lessen as one moved westwards. Kharbin (Harbin), in Manchuria, was said by General Kuropatkin, commander of land forces in the area, to be 'terrorized' by Social-Democratic agitators.² A body known as the 'Union of Army Social Democrats' endeavoured to systematize the efforts of committees set up in various units, and Party literature was extensively distributed in military camps around the city.

¹ M. Kudrzhinsky, 'Vladivostok v 1905 g.', in *Minuvshiye gody* (1908), no. 4, pp. 40ff. The author, an army doctor of liberal views, described the behaviour of the troops as worthy of 'slaves escaped from the galleys'. For some hours there was indiscriminate looting and violence.

² *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1925), no. 11-12, pp. 314-18.

At Chita the governor, Lieutenant-General I. V. Kholshchevnikov (who also served as military commander of the Transbaikalia region), was a democrat who sincerely welcomed the new constitutional order. The town had a sizable Jewish population, and he was anxious at the possibility of a *pogrom*. In his concern for public order he was willing to enlist the aid of the local Social Democrats, for whose organizing ability he had considerable respect. 'All the measures carried out by [the Party committee], or under its influence, invariably received his support'¹—this, at any rate, was one of the charges made against him at his subsequent court martial. The evidence showed that he had freed certain political prisoners at the committee's request, allowed them to supervise postal communications, and agreed in principle that soldiers under his command should work an eight-hour day. Kholshchevnikov could plausibly claim that in view of the weakness of the garrison he had to pursue a flexible policy, and that his liberalism contributed to the maintenance of civil peace. It was a fact that there was no serious violence at Chita until the arrival in January 1906 of General Rennenkampf, at the head of his notorious punitive expedition.

The Social Democrats thus had no need to stage an insurrection: they exercised authority more or less by consent. The Town Duma did their bidding; a 'mixed committee of employees and workers', various railwaymen's organizations, and a military soviet were all under their control. A similar situation existed at Irkutsk. Here there were two parallel co-ordinating committees, one overtly socialist and one formally non-party, but both of them were influenced by the local Social Democrats.² Their orators obtained official permission to address large throngs of soldiers, who then refused to perform their military duties. A body comprising three civilians (one Social Democrat, one S.R., and one liberal) and ten soldiers plotted to seize control of the town. But they hesitated for too long and were arrested. At Krasnoyarsk, further to the west, the Party leaders showed a similar half-heartedness. From October onwards their influence prevailed in the town, and early in December they set up a joint workers' and soldiers' soviet, which could have served as an instrument of insurrection. But while they debated, loyal troops were brought into the town. On 2 December several hundred activists, feeling the end approaching, withdrew to a building in the railway workshops. After some days of uncertainty artillery was brought up; the windows of the buildings were blown out by shell-fire; the thermometer dropped to forty degrees below zero, and they were virtually frozen into surrender.³

¹ 1905: *armiya v pervoy revolyutsii* (M.-Lg., 1927), p. 268.

² Ibid., pp. 269ff.; V. E. Mandelberg, *Iz perezhitogo* (Davos, 1910), p. 74.

³ Glumov, in *Otkliki sovremennosti* (1906), no. 2, p. 132.

Reviewing the Party's efforts in Siberia, a leading Menshevik stated: 'We did not think of capturing power, arresting the governor and so on, [but] calmly carried on with our work, trying to utilize as fully as we could our freedom of organization, agitation and propaganda.' Any more active course, he considered, was ruled out by the fact that 'the liberation movement . . . was not yet mature enough for attack, for creation.'¹ One of his colleagues posed the question still more forcibly.

Could the proletariat and soldiers alone [he asked], have administered the whole town [of Krasnoyarsk], if the rising had ended victoriously—i.e. was a dictatorship of the proletariat and soldiers possible in Krasnoyarsk? . . . No, they could not!. . . One must not forget that the reactionaries and the bourgeoisie would not have remained asleep. If the proletariat had taken power now, they would have found people and armies to defend themselves. The first necessity was to win all the democratic elements to our side. . . .²

In other words, the Siberian Mensheviks, unlike their colleagues in Moscow and some other centres, shrank from insurrection because they knew it would have led to a minority dictatorship, civil war, and almost certain defeat. Earlier in the year their *émigré* leaders had explicitly sanctioned the idea of 'local seizures of power' as a preliminary to a revolution at the centre. But when the opportunity presented itself they faltered. Their conduct bore witness to their underlying democratic convictions, but it was ruinous to their immediate prospects. It foreshadowed the fatal hesitations that were to beset the Mensheviks in 1917, and posed the question whether a 'proletarian insurrection' such as Marxists envisaged was a practical possibility in Russia at all.

¹ V. E. Mandelberg, p. 83.

² Glumov, pp. 148-9.

VIII

THE EBBING TIDE

By the New Year the disturbances had almost all been suppressed. The months that followed saw a steady consolidation of the Government's position. The left-wing parties were forced on to the defensive. Although there were still occasional outbreaks of violence, the revolutionary movement seemed to have lost its *élan*. It became increasingly clear that, if the gains of 1905 were to be preserved—let alone extended—this could only be done by constitutional means, using the opportunities afforded by the new national legislature.

Among the industrial workers there was a mild reaction against extremist policies that seemed to have resulted in failure. Many of them were inclined to abandon political activity of any kind. The Party activists had little sympathy with this defeatist mood, which appeared to them little short of treasonable.¹ The leaders of both factions put up a brave show of optimism. The more extreme among them argued that the December insurrections had actually been successful. 'What does it matter if this time Moscow has been laid in ruins?', cried Parvus: he went on to express his conviction that there would be a mighty new popular upsurge in the spring, when the final overthrow of tsarism would bring ample compensation for earlier disappointments.² Lenin's attitude was somewhat more reserved. He saw in the Moscow insurrection a welcome sign that the revolution had now reached a 'higher stage' than it had in October, when the proletariat had collaborated with bourgeois elements. But he added: 'Of course, in anything it is always possible to make mistakes, such as untimely and misplaced attempts to revolt; one can be carried away by extremes, which undoubtedly are always harmful. . . .'³ Privately he was inclined to blame Krasin, his colleague on the Central Committee and the Party's chief 'technician', for the unfortunate turn that events had taken in Moscow.⁴ In that city the local Bolsheviks instituted a hunt for scapegoats. Vasilyev criticized Shantser for his irresolution; Dosser and others attacked the head of the militia, Kudryavtsev; Zemlyachka

¹ Ts. Zelikson-Bobrovskaya, *Zapiski ryadovogo podpol'shchika* (M., 1924), pp. 116–17.

² Parvus, *Rossiia i revolyutsiya* (Spb., 1906), pp. 221, 224.

³ *Lenin*, ix. 24.

⁴ M. N. Lyadov, *Iz zhizni partii* . . . (M., 1926), p. 141.

blamed all and sundry.¹ It was at her insistence that the committee carried out a purge shortly after the fighting was over.

As was only to be expected, defeat gave a stimulus to factional bickering. At the local and the national level Bolsheviki accused Mensheviki of slowness in taking up arms, or readiness to capitulate before superior odds, while Mensheviki charged Bolsheviki with impetuosity or lack of realism. Plekhanov was a particularly outspoken critic of extremist tactics, which in his view had led to a fateful isolation of the workers from the moderate opposition.

It was not difficult to foresee this situation. Therefore it was not necessary to take up arms. People say: 'the workers compelled Social Democracy to support them'. But if this was so, the uprisings were spontaneous rather than conscious. . . . You will perhaps reply that I want to put a brake on the movement. I shall not deny this. Why *not* apply a brake? The function of a brake does not always deserve censure.²

Trotsky retorted that Plekhanov approached revolution 'just as though he were speaking of a game of chess, instead of an elemental movement involving millions'.³ The debate was not a particularly fruitful one. The truth of the matter was that members of both factions had had the opportunity to test their strategic ideas in practice, in various parts of the country, and that their efforts had nowhere been crowned with success. The Bolsheviki had acted on the assumption that by stimulating an insurrection in the major cities they would win sufficient support among the peasants and soldiers to swing the balance of power in their favour. But they shrank from a deliberate attempt to seize power by a *putsch*-type operation; their efforts at 'arming the masses' were amateur; and the echoes that resounded from the villages and army barracks were disappointingly faint. The Mensheviki were committed to the idea of rallying liberal middle-class elements behind the Party in a united left-wing front; but in practice they had more often than not adopted a crude sectarian policy, scarcely distinguishable from that of their rivals, which had aggravated the tension between the various opposition parties.

Evidently something was seriously at fault with the Social Democrats' approach to politics. The root of the trouble was the Party's weakness as an organization—that is to say, the lack of a natural organic bond between its leaders and those whose interests they claimed to represent. It therefore remains for us to examine the extent of the Party's success in its efforts to influence the non-proletarian elements

¹ *PR* (1925), no. 39, p. 120; *Krasnaya Presnya* . . . (M., 1930), p. 21; M. N. Lyadov, p. 142.

² *Plekhanov*, xv. 12.

³ L. D. Trotsky, 1905, p. 217.

of the population, and to strike root amidst the mass of industrial workers. In conclusion we may consider some of the wider implications of the Social Democrats' experience in the events of 1905.

A comparison of the extent of the upheaval in ethnically Russian territory with that in minority areas such as Poland, Latvia, or Georgia at once indicates the role played in the revolution by national sentiment. This gave left-wing parties in the latter parts of the country, even where they had an overt bias in favour of urban labour, an avenue of approach to the peasantry denied to their Russian comrades. For in the black-earth belt, and still more so in areas to the north and east, the agrarian movement was essentially a non-political phenomenon. It had pronounced anarchic features—the result of the heritage of serfdom, and the cultural backwardness it implied. Trotsky wrote despondently of the Russian peasants' 'narrowness of outlook' and 'lack of independent initiative', emphasizing the extent to which they were isolated from the urban nerve-centres of the country. Once the burden of feudal dues had been cast from their shoulders, they were satisfied, and repaid with rank ingratitude the cities that had fought for their rights; the emancipated peasants became fanatics for "order".¹ This was perhaps an excessively dogmatic view, but it did express a fundamental truth which all the other Party leaders were to a greater or lesser extent prepared to recognize. This did not prevent them looking forward to a new wave of agrarian unrest in 1906, which they hoped would prove more powerful than the first. But when this developed, in the spring and early summer of that year, the situation in the cities had been more or less stabilized.² So far as ethnically Russian or Ukrainian territory was concerned, the main areas of disturbance in 1905 were to be found in the black-earth belt and the lower Volga region. In Saratov province alone 272 estates were looted and 9½ million roubles' worth of damage done; in Kursk the equivalent figures were 127 estates and 3 million roubles.³ A number of manor-houses with a wealth of books and *objets d'art*, furniture, and other valuable property fell prey to this orgy of destruction. Where the

¹ Ibid., p. 58.

² It has been estimated that half the administrative districts in European Russia were affected by disturbances between May and August, almost as many as in the preceding autumn (250 *uezdy*, as against 261) (A. Shestakov, *Krest'yanskaya revolyutsiya 1905-7 gg. v Rossii* (M., 1926), p. 27). These statistics are of course most inadequate, since they make no allowance for the scope or intensity of the movement. Maslov, who is a more reliable source, puts the figure of districts affected in the autumn of 1905, at 160 (*Krest'yanskiye dvizheniya v Rossii v epokhu I-oy revolyutsii* (M., 1924), p. 79).

³ P. P. Maslov, pp. 98-99; cf. *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1925), no. 11-12, p. 190; *PR* (1925), no. 29, pp. 103-35.

peasants acted in a more organized fashion, there was less wanton damage. But in general their movement was quite spontaneous and uncontrollable. An *ad hoc* committee would call a meeting and decide 'to strike' (*bastovat*): the term was drawn from the industrial workers' vocabulary, but here the parallel ended. The peasants would take their horses and carts, set out for the estate of a nearby landowner, and help themselves to his grain, timber, or livestock. Where the proprietor or his agents offered resistance, and sometimes where they did not, they were liable to be attacked. Most of them, however, had already taken refuge in flight. The house would be looted and then, as often as not, set on fire—ostensibly to prevent it from being used to harbour cossack punitive squads, of which the peasants were understandably afraid.

The most conspicuous feature of these operations was their local character. Each village acted for itself. Professional agitators might prepare the way by circulating propaganda and holding meetings, but they seldom exercised a direct influence upon the peasants' decision to act. Almost invariably the key factor was the economic situation in the particular village concerned. Thus it frequently occurred that one community would be in a revolutionary frame of mind, while in another not far off life would continue normally. Sometimes it might be significant that a village was situated near a factory or railway station, which could act as a channel for new ideas. But this was not always the case: it could mean that the inhabitants of these villages were the first to show animosity towards striking workers or railwaymen, whom they held responsible for the interruption in their supplies of manufactured goods.

The outlook of the peasant rioters was a strange compound of semi-digested revolutionary notions and age-old prejudices. Loyalty to the Tsar and the Church was in most places still strong, and agitators had to tread carefully in broaching these delicate issues. Police brutality, or the exactions of the local priest, might well cause friction; nevertheless, this did not translate itself into wholesale condemnation of the existing system. The peasants' attitude was essentially conservative, although this did not prevent them from endorsing far-reaching demands for political and civil freedoms. How far they appreciated the implications of these radical slogans it is difficult to say.¹ In the western

¹ Some evidence bearing on this question, relating to the summer of 1906, may be found in A. A. Vasilyev and V. A. Kudryavtsev (eds.), *Krest'yanskiye nakazy Samarskoy gubernii* (Samara, 1906). These *nakazy* were generally formulated by intellectuals and subsequently endorsed at village meetings. Most observers agree that the peasants' interest in social issues (and particularly the agrarian question) was greater than in political change, but any generalization is apt to be misleading.

Ukraine peasants would participate in a *pogrom* as cheerfully as they would sack some landlord's estate. General Dubasov, who toured Chernigov province in November 1905 to investigate the disorders, found peasant communities that interpreted the October Manifesto in the sense that the Tsar had given his people licence 'to beat the Jews', since they were to blame for their troubles.¹ The peasant was in the habit of putting his own construction on unfamiliar ideas, and his intellect worked in an unpredictable way.

For a sophisticated urban intellectual a sudden confrontation with the realities of life in a Russian village could come as a sobering shock. The gulf that existed between these two worlds, which politically were centuries apart, is brought out by Vladimir Voytinsky in his invaluable memoirs. Late in November, the writer, then a student and a Bolshevik propagandist, left St. Petersburg for Novgorod province to help mobilize the peasants in support of the revolution. While journeying there by train he was astounded to hear his travelling-companions inveighing against the students for 'selling Russia to the Japanese'. On arrival at his destination he called a meeting. The ground had to some extent been prepared by the village teacher, a man of radical views, and Voytinsky's anti-war speech was well received. The resolution he proposed was adopted enthusiastically: so much so that some of his listeners, to his embarrassment, dropped to their knees, crossed themselves, and swore a solemn oath 'to stand for the people's cause'. On the other hand, his attempts to evoke sympathy for the struggling proletariat were heard listlessly. In some villages which he visited members of the audience walked out, denouncing him for 'deceiving the people'. Finally, he and his friends were obliged to seek refuge in the waiting-room of a local railway station, where they were almost lynched by a hostile crowd. They owed their lives to the intervention of a detachment of troops, who dispersed the jeering mob and took the propagandists of revolution into protective custody.²

It could be argued that Novgorod province was a quiet backwater, untypical of the Russian countryside in the autumn of 1905. But at Nezhin in Chernigov province Dubasov reported a rather similar case, where an army unit was called upon to rescue some (unspecified) 'democrats' from an angry crowd³—and this was an area where the Social Democrats had a certain amount of success in stirring up the landless labourers. Their role was much less significant than that of the S.R.-inspired Peasant Union. It is characteristic that the governor of Poltava province should have found it necessary to mention only the

¹ *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1925), no. 11-12, pp. 182-92.

² V. Voytinsky, *Gody pobed i porazheniy* (Berlin-Pg.-M., 1923), i. 278ff.

³ *Krasnyy arkhiv* (1925), no. 11-12, p. 187.

latter organization in his reports on the disturbances.¹ The Social-Democratic committee at Nizhny Novgorod seems to have been the only one to set up a special group to conduct agitation in the villages. But its activities were not on an extensive scale: early in November it held no more than one meeting a day.² Some other committees undertook such work themselves, where they had the resources to do so. The Tver' committee, for example, drew up a 'model resolution' for endorsement at village meetings, which contained a statement explicitly recognizing the R.S.D.R.P. as 'the sole representative of the real interests of the oppressed people'.³ But a document of this kind cannot have carried much weight. Maslov writes that the peasants would often express their agreement with the views of any agitator who appeared, whether he were an S.R. or a Social Democrat.⁴ Where an element of conscious choice existed, their preference was very clearly for the former.

It is not difficult to see why this should have been so. (The Marxist programme was tailored to the needs of the industrial worker. It appealed to the peasant primarily as a citizen, putting forward various 'general democratic' demands on his behalf, but playing down the all-important land question.) Both factions had now declared themselves in favour of expropriating large estates, but this found no clear reflection in the Party's printed propaganda. (Far from inciting the peasants to engage in destructive actions, its spokesmen sought to restrain them, on the grounds that the future of the land should be settled by the constituent assembly.

If you really want land and liberty, [ran one such proclamation], . . . aid the workers. As soon as the struggle flares up everywhere, when we in the cities give you the word, the signal, then rise as one man! Expel all the old officials; . . . do not pay taxes or redemption dues; set up peasant committees and make a note of the land you need. But do not burn or loot estates.

The immediate task before them was stated rather vaguely:

Join workers on strike and support them courageously.⁵

By the standards of the time this was a conservative document.

(The Social Democrats were caught in the complexities of their doctrine. They were frightened that, by going too far in their support

¹ *DiM*, iv (iii) 297, 309; cf. pp. 311ff. for evidence of Social-Democratic influence.

² Maslov, pp. 87ff.; cf. the budgetary statement in *DiM*, iv (ii). 149, and P. I. Kilmov, *Revolyutsionnaya deyatel'nost' rabochikh v derevne v 1905-7 gg.* (M., 1960), pp. 145-6; M. F. Vladimirsky, p. 125.

³ *DiM*, iv (ii). 188.

⁴ Maslov, p. 53.

⁵ Saratov committee proclamation, in *DiM*, iv (ii). 767-8.

for the 'agrarian movement', they would help to consolidate the position of the petty proprietors—'reactionaries' by definition. If they emerged as the prime beneficiaries of a land reform, the rural poor would merely have exchanged a 'capitalist' task-master for a 'feudal' one, and the Party would have betrayed the class whose interests it was supposed to defend. It was the familiar dilemma that had led to the compromise agrarian programme of 1902. This had turned out to be a millstone around the Party's neck, as critics had prophesied at the time. During the autumn and winter of 1905 there was mounting pressure for it to be revised. Lenin resurrected his old idea that the land should be nationalized. For the Mensheviks Maslov countered with a proposal for 'municipalization'—the investment of ultimate ownership in reformed local government bodies, which would lease the land for long periods at a low rent.¹ Neither of these schemes seemed likely to appeal to the peasants themselves. They would be content with nothing less than the wholesale re-partition of the expropriated land between peasant households, and in this view they were encouraged by the S.R.s and the Peasant Union.

The Party's modest showing in its efforts to win over the peasantry goes some way to explain why it was not more successful in its endeavours to subvert the armed forces—which largely consisted, as agitators were fond of saying, of '*muzhiki* in uniform'. Party theorists tended to exaggerate the importance of social origin in determining the political attitudes of men on active service: many other equally important factors were involved as well. Nevertheless, it was broadly true that among the most revolutionary elements were men with an urban or industrial background, while the discipline maintained in the infantry owed much to the Russian peasants' traditional submissiveness.

A total of eighty-nine disturbances took place in military units during the last three months of 1905.² Almost all of them were local outbreaks. The beginnings of systematic organization were evident only among the soldiers of the Manchurian Army, where the committees that sprang up in the various units were often able to make contact with one another and undertake co-ordinated action. But they were mainly concerned, as we have seen, with protecting their own vital interests in conditions of general chaos. It was not their aim to seize power

¹ For an exposition of the two positions, as they came to be formulated in 1906, see *Lenin*, ix. 51–76; P. P. Maslov, *Kritika agrarnykh program i proyekt programmy* (M., 1905); *Prot. IV*, pp. 55–61, 74ff. At the fourth Party congress in April 1906 Maslov won a formal victory, but Lenin continued to propagate his views. The wider implications of this dispute are touched on below, p. 294.

² K. Rozenblyum, *Voyennye organizatsii bol'shevikov 1905–7 gg.* (M.-Lg., 1931), p. 45.

from their officers or to 'democratize' the army by force—still less to enable local civilian groups to establish themselves in authority. So far as European Russia was concerned, the outbreaks that occurred arose largely from causes intrinsic to the armed forces themselves. The leaders were junior officers or N.C.O.s whose courage and self-assurance earned them the respect and allegiance of their comrades. A striking example was Lieut. Schmidt, hero of the Sevastopol rising in November, an idealist who acted largely on his own independent initiative. Such men were not agents of any political group.

It has been calculated that [there were twenty-seven Social-Democratic organizations in the army in 1905,] while more than double that number of civilian Party committees or groups disseminated propaganda among the troops.¹ But when it came to a crisis they were often unable to provide a lead; the men were left to their own devices, and it was generally a matter of hours before the revolt collapsed. [Since the soldiers' grievances were genuine enough, it was not too difficult to rouse them to action. The problem was to sustain the momentum: and here the men's lack of political awareness made itself felt. Though they might endorse with enthusiasm the democratic slogans that were on everyone's lips, the barrack walls inevitably limited their perspective. Their attitude towards civilian revolutionary agitators was usually tinged with reserve. Part of the trouble lay in the involved and abstract jargon favoured by Marxist intellectuals.²] Another obstacle was the tendency of the propagandists to repeat platitudinous precepts instead of giving concrete instructions. [The soldiers respected the realities of military power. They were unwilling to risk their lives in some badly prepared venture, and treated with contempt would-be advisers who allowed themselves to be carried away by fantasy.] It frequently happened that disaffected troops would inform their civilian contacts that they would remain neutral in the event of a civil disturbance, but were unable to undertake any more spectacular gesture. It was one thing to promise support for the workers if they rose in revolt; it was another to take the lead themselves in the vague hope that the workers would support *them*. Yet all too often this was precisely what Social-Democratic agitators—contrary to their own theories—were urging them to do.

Although the revolutionary crisis that resulted from the Russo-Japanese war seriously weakened discipline in many military and naval

¹ K. Rozenblyum, *Voyennye organizatsii bol'shevikov 1905–7 gg.*, p. 53.

² One sympathizer, then stationed in Moscow, later recalled: 'From time to time we used to come across Party literature. . . . The soldiers would pick it up and read it, if they could read, or smoke it, if they could not; but in either case the results were much the same: extremely little of it was digested' (V. Ulyaninsky, in *1905 g. v ocherkakh i vospominaniyakh uchastnikov* (M., 1927), p. 35).

units, the situation was not really comparable to that brought about in 1917. [The monarchy survived, and by and large retained its hold on the loyalties of men on active service.] The proportion of reservists to regular troops was much lower than it was during the First World War. Last but not least, Russia made peace in good time. [The Government was thus able to use military force on an extensive scale in crushing the revolutionary threat.]

A still more important reason for the defeat of the opposition was its political disunity. By the end of the year there were in St. Petersburg well over a dozen left-wing parties and groups, whose leaders expended a great deal of effort defining their position *vis-à-vis* the Government and one another. The principal division ran between liberals and socialists. That this should have been so remains one of the curiosities of the Russian political scene in 1905. [In the provincial towns the relations between adherents of one trend or another were often quite harmonious. This showed that the basis for co-operation was there, if the leaders had been disposed to build on it. But those in the upper echelons of the parties were the keenest to assert their own individuality and the most distrustful of others.] Those furthest to the left tended to be the most inflexible and dogmatic. [The Kadets were in general anxious to maintain good relations with the socialists, but their calls for solidarity met with a frigid reception. In Marxist eyes they stood condemned as 'bourgeois'. They were judged less by their actions than by the Social Democrats' own preconceptions as to the manner in which they were likely to behave. It was considered axiomatic that, once the 'bourgeois-democratic revolution' had been accomplished, the liberals would turn against their former allies in an attempt to crush them.] The more sophisticated commentators had some lingering doubts whether the changes wrought in Russian political life by the October Manifesto really amounted to a 'bourgeois revolution'. But this did not inhibit them from putting the worst possible construction on the Kadets' motives. [Their concern with the elections to the Duma was interpreted as evidence that they had sacrificed their programmatic commitment to a democratically elected constituent assembly.] They were accused of hypocrisy and half-hearted devotion to commonly held ideas. Yet it was questionable whether the Social Democrats themselves were still loyal to their fundamental strategic concept—that the coming revolution could only be 'bourgeois-democratic'.

The most extreme theories were propagated in the columns of the two newspapers published legally by Party agencies in St. Petersburg: the Menshevik *Nachalo* and the Bolshevik *Novaya Zhizn'*. The factional labels were deceptive, for there was only a slight difference of

emphasis between them. The real division of opinion within the Party at this time ran between those who accepted, with reservations, the ideas of Trotsky—the main figure on *Nachalo*—and those who did not.¹

Trotsky approached ideological problems with the same tempestuous energy that he showed in guiding the affairs of the St. Petersburg Soviet. He now went further than he had dared in his articles published in *Iskra* at the beginning of the year. The course of events in the capital, he considered, showed that the proletariat was exercising 'hegemony' over the liberal opposition.¹ Its vigour and zeal put the workers in Western Europe to shame: revolutionary Russia might well be closer to the eight-hour day than Great Britain, despite its lack of a powerful trade-union movement. He went on to argue:

There is no stage in the bourgeois revolution at which this force [the Russian proletariat] could become satiated, for it is driven forward by the iron logic of class interest. The law of self-preservation dictates to the proletariat a programme of permanent revolution. The proletariat accomplishes the fundamental tasks of democracy and then, at a certain moment, the logic of its struggle to consolidate its political power confronts it with problems that are purely socialist. Revolutionary permanency is established between our minimum and maximum programmes.²

His disciples proceeded to dot the i's and cross the t's of this doctrine. One of them (apparently Martynov, who now veered sharply to the left) pointed out that the Party had never taken it upon itself to define the length of time that should separate the two phases of revolution. 'It seems that, the longer history delays the fall of absolutism, and the further capitalism develops in the world at large, as well as in the womb of old Russia, the more we should reckon with the possibility of the revolution developing from the democratic stage to the socialist one.' Had not Marxists always said that the technological prerequisites for socialism—advanced industry and a high level of class consciousness—did not as yet exist in Russia? Such considerations, the writer held, were important only 'in the ultimate instance'. The really decisive factor was 'the degree to which the class struggle has developed'—and this was a process greatly influenced by such 'accidents' as the prevailing international situation.³

Not for the first or last time Russian Marxists were seeking to resolve their theoretical dilemmas by casting hopeful glances in the direction of Western Europe. The outlook, however, was none too favourable. The same issue of *Nachalo* that carried Trotsky's striking article also contained a contribution by Franz Mehring, a German Marxist thinker

¹ *Nachalo*, no. 1 (13 November 1905).

² *Ibid.*, no. 10 (25 November 1905).

³ *Ibid.*, no. 7 (20 November 1905).

of uncontestable authority. Though entitled 'Permanent Revolution', it was far more cautious in tone than the effusions of Trotsky. 'The Russian workers', Mehring warned, 'cannot jump over stages of historical development, or pass from absolutism to socialism at the wave of a hand.' At the most they could shorten and ease the path to their final emancipation. The new order would bring universal suffrage, progressive social legislation, and civil freedoms—but that was all. Far from ignoring or criticizing the Russian liberals, he suggested that the extent of the workers' gains depended upon the scope of the movement in 'society': for every step forward taken by the bourgeois leaders, the Social Democrats should take one as well.¹

Some Bolsheviks echoed Trotsky's ideas.² Lenin remained fairly resistant to these temptations—at least in his public utterances. His attitude towards the liberals was somewhat confused. In a review of the November *zemstvo* congress he spoke in familiar terms of 'the alliance between the Government and the bourgeoisie', which the workers and peasants must resolutely oppose.³ But at the same time he seemed still to doubt whether the alliance was really an accomplished fact.

The Tsar [he wrote], is promising the bourgeoisie more and more, seeking to discover whether the possessing classes are not at long last beginning their *volte-face* to the side of 'order'. But so long as this 'order' is embodied in Trepov and his black hundreds, the Tsar is in danger of remaining a voice crying in the wilderness.⁴

As late as 23 November Lenin thought that the liberals were 'beginning . . . to lose faith in the "great" acrobat Witte, and to look leftwards in search of a force capable of carrying out the revolution that has become absolutely essential.'⁵ But by the end of the year he had returned to his earlier prognostication of a 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship', to be established by the workers and peasants alone, with the liberals standing passively on the side-lines. He made it clear that there was to be no place for them in the prospective provisional Government. After this was established the bourgeoisie would play a counter-revolutionary role; the proletariat and peasantry would have to struggle against it 'to preserve their democratic gains for the sake of a socialist revolution'. This required aid from abroad: 'the European workers will show us "how it is done", and then, together with them, we will carry out a socialist revolution'.⁶ This was as close as he came to

¹ Ibid., no. 10 (25 November 1905).

² Cf. the highly optimistic tone of A. Lunacharsky's article of 27 November 1905), reprinted in *Novaya Zhizn'* . . . : *polnyy tekst* (Lg., 1926), pt. III, pp. 23-5.

³ *Lenin*, viii. 394. ⁴ Ibid., p. 369. ⁵ Ibid., p. 405. ⁶ Ibid., pp. 407, 427.

Trotsky's views: his position was not really different from that he had adopted earlier in the year.

The only prominent Party leader then in Russia who stood out against the prevailing extremist tendency was Martov. But his position as one of the editors jointly responsible for *Nachalo* was an equivocal one, and some of his articles suggest that he could not make up his mind.¹ In private he confessed to his mixed emotions.

The prestige of Social Democracy stands incredibly high, [he wrote to Axelrod on his arrival in the capital]. . . . The influence of our ideas is so colossal that, if events continue to take such a tempestuous course, a 'seizure of power' at times begins to seem almost inevitable. [He hastened to add]: This does not mean that it would be something tempting. I fear that it would be a turning-point in the revolution, and no worse than the Jacobin dictatorship was [*sic*].²

This suggests that he might not have been averse to such a dictatorship if he could somehow have convinced himself that it was historically necessary.

Axelrod did not arrive in Russia until 1906; Plekhanov never returned at all. In the autumn of 1905 Russian Menshevism to all intents and purposes spoke through the mouths of those who, swept from their moorings by the revolutionary torrent, were apparently ready to abandon their basic premisses. In the circumstances it was not really surprising that (many liberals) should have found the Social Democrats awkward bedfellows. Both their theories and their practical actions suggested that too close a collaboration with them might lead the country either to anarchy or to dictatorship.

Marxist spokesmen of course hotly denied this charge and maintained instead that only the self-interest of the 'possessing classes' obstructed the formation of an effective common front against the régime. In the years that followed publicists from both camps hurled at one another the grave charge of having sabotaged the democratic cause. The argument cannot really be decided in the terms in which it was expressed. The most that one can usefully do is to consider the

¹ Cf. *Nachalo*, no. 1 (13 November 1905). When the paper was founded some agreement seems to have been reached between the Mensheviks already in St. Petersburg and the returning exiles that individual contributors should be free to express their opinions without incurring censure by their colleagues. It is not difficult to see why Trotsky, after his unfortunate experiences on *Iskra*, should have insisted on some such arrangement, and he was now in the stronger position. Martov attempted to neutralize the effect of this by placing *Nachalo* under the control of the Menshevik 'Organization Committee' set up in May, but this could be no more than a formality. To Axelrod he wrote: 'Whether we shall get on with [Parvus] and Trotsky remains to be seen. . . . We shall have to allow the propaganda of some fairly risky ideas without being able to criticize them' (*Pis'ma*, pp. 145-6).

² *Pis'ma*, p. 146.

degree of realism shown by the liberals and the socialists in their evaluation of the situation at the time. This suggests that both camps were labouring under ponderous delusions. The Octobrists and Kadets overestimated the readiness of the Tsar and his advisers to abide by constitutional undertakings, and did not take into account the reserves of popular support which helped the conservatives to recoup their political fortunes. This latter error was one they shared with their socialist critics. The latter were more aware of the role of force in effecting change in an authoritarian society. But their brash self-assertiveness and anti-bourgeois bias lost them a good deal of potential support. In retrospect it seems reasonable to suppose that, had the Social Democrats pursued a more sophisticated and flexible approach, they could have exercised much more influence over the moderates than they did. In 1905 Russian liberalism was still only in an initial phase of evolution. It lacked coherent shape: it had neither doctrinal nor organizational unity, and its *émigré* intellectual traditions laid it wide open to penetration from the left. It was largely the dogmatism of the Marxists that prevented the emergence in the Russia of 1905 of an effective 'popular front'. Whether such a coalition could have altered the outcome of events remains debatable; it may well be that the conservative forces were more than a match even for a united opposition. The fact remains that, for good or ill, the opportunities for concerted action were not utilized to the full.

'We measured the temperature of the proletariat by our own pulses,' one Social Democrat wrote later, reviewing the Party's experience in 1905.¹ It was an article of faith among them that a political party was the instrument of a particular social class, and that it was their own exalted calling to represent the interests of the industrial workers. In a state of revolutionary intoxication, it was easy to forget that in practice they were dealing only with the most 'advanced' and active section of this class—and that even such men, with firm political commitments, did not approach matters in the same spirit as they did themselves. They did not share the intellectuals' semi-mystical faith in revolution as an end in itself. In their eyes it could never be more than a desperate expedient.

By the autumn of 1905, it is true, aspirations for radical change had been generated on a massive scale. Evidence of this was to be found in the scenes of spontaneous and genuine enthusiasm that occurred in many cities. The great popularity of the soviets testified to a touching faith among the hitherto inarticulate crowds in the capacity of these new self-constituted bodies to satisfy their needs. Eye-witnesses have

¹ P. A. Garvi, *Vospominaniya s.-demokrata* (N.Y., 1946), p. 460.

recorded the appearance at meetings of the St. Petersburg Soviet of *khodoki*—men chosen by their fellows to make the long pilgrimage to the capital in order to obtain satisfaction of some local grievance. It was a custom that dated from time immemorial. In the following summer such pilgrims approached the Duma for a similar purpose: it was, so to speak, the new *vlast'* (authority). It is difficult to appreciate the extent of the psychological shock administered by the events of 1905 to men brought up on a diet of pious maxims and ancient superstitions. Sometimes the words of socialist propagandists were received almost as the revelation of a new gospel.¹

[This sudden upsurge of popular feeling placed formidable demands upon the Party. How was this colossal source of energy to be harnessed securely to its cause? The R.S.D.R.P. in 1905 was basically an agency for propaganda and agitation. Its power lay in its slogans—in its impassioned call for the overthrow of the existing order and its promise of an ideal future in a democratic Russia, purged from tyranny by a thoroughgoing revolution. If pressed, its spokesmen would have readily admitted that the phase of destruction would be followed by one of construction—the building of the new order; but they themselves tended to play down the complex issues which this raised. They saw the immediate problem simply as one of organizing a militant struggle against their enemies—a revolutionary crusade. Their appeal was above all to men's emotions: often, it must be said, to their less virtuous impulses, as well as to their idealism. It could scarcely be otherwise if they were to make their voices heard above the torrent.]

[The leaders of the Party were naturally gratified at the swift increase in its authority during the latter months of 1905. The more thoughtful of them realized that it could evaporate just as rapidly unless it were consolidated in some durable organizational form. But all too often they grossly over-simplified the problems involved in setting up and maintaining such bodies, as the channels through which their influence could reach out to the millions still in 'darkness'. Their Marxist faith

¹ At a political meeting held in the precincts of Kazan University a speech by a Party agitator was heard in reverent silence until one elderly worker rose, invoked the Deity, and cried: 'How simple all this is! Why, brethren, did we not work this out for ourselves?' Back from the crowd came the reply: 'Because we were always in our cups.' At the end of the address a cab-driver who belonged to the Old Believer sect gave a rousing call for a holy war against 'capital' (A. Arosev, in *Krasnaya nov'* (1925), no. 9, pp. 170ff.). According to an independent observer of the December events in Rostov-on-Don 'socialist orators had a colossal success. Even the most stolid workers, foremen, and others with their own houses and savings, who but yesterday were upbraiding the younger men for insubordination and want of respect, now attended meetings as conscientiously as if they had been church services. . . . All sections of the population without exception put their trust in the omnipotence of "the parties".' ('All.', *Russkoye bogatstvo* (1908), no. 2, p. 82).

lulled them into the comforting assumption that, as the masses attained the desirable state of 'class consciousness', they would forthwith identify themselves with their self-appointed leaders, and that this situation could then be perpetuated indefinitely without much ado. It was hard for them to recognize that organizations which had grown up spontaneously could develop interests of their own,¹ and that the Party would be faced with the purely political problem of working out its attitude towards each of them if it wished to ensure their support.

[During the autumn of 1905 the trade union movement made such headway that it could no longer be treated by Party leaders with their earlier cavalier indifference. As we have seen, an especially important role was played by the railwaymen's and telegraphists' organizations, which retained their independence of the left-wing parties.] Industrial trade unions proliferated in the two capital cities, and came into existence on a smaller scale in a number of other towns as well. By December 1905 there were from 35 to 40 unions in St. Petersburg, and as many as 50 in Moscow, with an estimated membership of 35,000 and 24,000 respectively.¹ As these figures suggest, the unions were still extremely small, but they were growing rapidly—until their development was arbitrarily cut short by revolution and counter-revolution. The Central Bureaux that had been set up in St. Petersburg and Moscow (and less effectively in a few other centres) did much to facilitate the emergence of new labour organizations: they provided accommodation for meetings and published information bulletins which popularized the idea of association. The unions tended to adopt the political affiliation of their organizers, the great majority of whom were now linked, directly or indirectly, with the Party.

The Social Democrats' most important success was in assuming a measure of control over the movement towards unity at the national level. The first conference of Russian trade unions, which took place in Moscow on 6–7 October, was attended by representatives from several major centres. St. Petersburg was represented by Prokopovich and other members of the now almost defunct Liberation League, and Kharkov by the syndicalist Yevdokimov. The Social Democrats (most of whom were Mensheviks) commanded a majority. Under their pressure it was resolved that the trade union congress which it was planned to convoke in the near future should be restricted to 'proletarian' organizations, in order to neutralize any right-wing or liberal tendencies.² Some Mensheviks were eager to invite representatives of

¹ A. Kats and Yu. Milonov, *1905: professional'noye dvizhenie* (M.-Lg., 1926), pp. 38, 47, 193ff.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 67ff.; V. Grinevich, *Professional'noye dvizhenie rabochikh v Rossii* (Spb., 1908), p. 244.

individual factories as well, in the hope of converting the assembly into a 'workers' congress' on the lines advocated by Axelrod. The idea was that this congress would force the Party to undertake a democratic reform of its own organization and adapt itself to the conditions of open political activity.

This plan was unpopular, not only with the Bolsheviks (who had very different notions on Party reform), but also with left-wing Mensheviks such as Trotsky. He was instrumental in securing the postponement of the congress, so that it should not distract attention from his own preparations for a nation-wide congress of soviets.¹ Shortly afterwards the hope of holding a congress of either type had to be dropped, owing to the wave of arrests that followed the Moscow insurrection.² As a substitute a second conference of trade union representatives was held in February 1906: the congress had to wait until 1917.

It was against this background that there developed a public debate within the Party as to the proper attitude to be adopted towards the unions. The Bolshevik line now became more sophisticated. In October *Proletariy* ('The Proletarian': successor to *Vperyod*) published an article by one M. Borisov.³ He argued that the Party should not be afraid to assist trade unions, since they were 'an inevitable phenomenon of life', but a clear distinction should be drawn between the two types of organization. The unions' activities were to be restricted to economic matters, and in this sphere they were to be fully autonomous. At the same time this autonomy was to be reduced to a fiction by the provision that a 'secret agency' (*neglasnaya agentura*) of Party agitators should function within each union, using its position to combat 'opportunist' ideas. These agents were to be admitted to membership of the district (*rayon*) committee of the Party, but not to any more senior caucus. This precaution was evidently designed to prevent 'the tail wagging the dog'—i.e. the agitators identifying themselves with the interests of their fellow-unionists and inadvertently gaining influence over Party policy. Borisov's views were a logical development of those expressed in Lenin's *What is to be Done?* One refinement was the suggestion that, for reasons of tactical expediency, bodies of this type should continue to bear a non-party label even when the bulk of their members had already joined the Party.

¹ See above, p. 239.

² *Byulleteni Muzeya Sodeystviya Trudu*, no. 1 (16 November 1905), p. 2; *Materialy po professional'nomu dvizheniyu rabochikh* (M., 1906), vyp. I, p. 2.

³ It was enthusiastically endorsed by Lenin and later reprinted in *Novaya zhizn'*. The writer has not been identified. Text in A. Kats and Yu. Milonov, pp. 337ff. See S. M. Schwarz, pp. 25ff., and T. T. Hammond, *Lenin on trade unions and revolution* (N.Y., 1957), pp. 61–62.

Early in November the Bolshevik Central Committee took the unusual step of circulating a draft resolution on this topic for discussion by the local committees. This document was still more reserved in tone, and laid emphasis upon the systematic utilization of unions as a means of gaining new recruits for the Party. Support was to be given only to those unions that allowed the Party freedom to agitate for the adoption of its policies; those already committed to some other party were to be infiltrated, and if this failed to bring about a change of heart the agents were to bring about a schism.¹

In practice little attention seems to have been paid to this resolution, although local Bolsheviks often adopted tactics identical with those it recommended. It is interesting as the most determined effort made by the Bolsheviks to grapple with a problem that touched the very nerve-centre of their beliefs. Although Lenin was not the author, there is little doubt that it expressed his private views. In public he avoided detailed pronouncements on this issue, treating the trade unions as just one among many types of 'formless mass organizations' and repeating his earlier dicta.² At this juncture he did not advocate any systematic effort to utilize trade unions or other such bodies as 'front organizations' that could expand the Party's influence. His position was more conservative, in that he was still primarily concerned to safeguard the integrity of the Party as the political *élite* of the labour movement.

An ambitious approach of this kind was favoured, not by Lenin, but by the Mensheviks. Having won for themselves a strong position in the trade unions, they were confident of their ability to direct their activities in the Party's interests. In *Nachalo* D. Ginsburg (Koltsov) argued that, although it would be tactically short-sighted to insist on unions adopting a Party label (since this would lead to the exclusion of large numbers of workers who did not accept its programme), this should nevertheless remain the Party's ultimate objective. He put forward the slogan: 'For neutral unions with the aim of making them Social-Democratic!'³ The Menshevik position differed from that of their rivals in two main respects. First, they wanted the unions to play an active political role, and were opposed to any attempt to limit them to the economic sphere. Secondly, they were resigned to the fact that most unions would remain non-party bodies during the foreseeable future, and hoped for a healthy and equitable relationship between them and the Party. It is perhaps an exaggeration to say, as one modern authority does, that the Mensheviks sought 'co-ordination, not subordination' from the unions,⁴ since they had by no means abandoned

¹ A. Kats and Yu. Milonov, pp. 345-6.

² *Lenin*, viii. 412-18.

³ *Nachalo*, no. 8 (23 November 1905).

⁴ S.M. Schwarz, p. 12.

the idea of the Party's paramountcy. The resolution which they submitted to the fourth Party congress in April 1906 prescribed that 'all Party members should join a union, take an active part in all its functions, and constantly strengthen among its members their feeling of class solidarity and class consciousness, in order to bind the unions organically to the Party, by struggle and agitation'.¹ The Bolsheviks found this sufficiently acceptable to vote for it—after Lenin had withdrawn an alternative draft which made the same point in more outspoken terms.² There was thus a good deal of common ground between the two factions on this issue. It was only later that they drifted apart, with the Bolsheviks insisting ever more firmly on the principle of Party control and the Mensheviks regarding the unions as their natural allies.³ So far as the utilization of unions for Party purposes was concerned, Lenin may well have learnt something from his rivals.

In the circumstances trade unionists who genuinely wished to remain politically independent found the policy of the R.S.D.R.P. unattractive. It was not surprising that schisms should have taken place at this time within several unions. Some groups broke away from the St. Petersburg Union of Printers because, as one commentator put it, 'strong dissatisfaction exists among a majority of workers at the fact that our unions have turned into political clubs and have neglected their proper functions'.⁴ From the Party leaders' point of view the most serious problem was that there remained a wide, if unacknowledged, gulf between their own attitudes and those of the average Russian trade unionist. To bridge it the Social Democrats needed time—time both to propagate their views and to amend them in the light of experience. But this was a luxury that the Government was not prepared to grant them.

The authorities took the view that, since the Party was so obviously concerned to infiltrate trade unions and other labour organizations, any bodies in which Social Democrats were known to be active should

¹ *Prot. IV*, p. 528. This suggests that they were prepared to apply coercion, as well as ideological pressure, in winning non-party union members to their side—although Ginsburg, in the article quoted above, recommended that only 'democratic' methods should be employed.

² *Lenin*, ix. 48.

³ See, for the Mensheviks, B. Torgashev, *Professional'noye dvizhenie i s.-demokratiya* (M., 1907), and for the Bolsheviks M. Novoselov, in *Itogi London-skogo s'yezda* (Spb., 1907); also T. T. Hammond, pp. 68ff.

⁴ 'Severyanin', in *Rabochiy golos* (Spb.), no. 1 (25 November 1905). This was an independent Social-Democratic paper edited by V. P. Makhnovets (Akimov), the one-time Economist leader. For his views, see his article 'Stroiteli budushchego' in *Obrazovanie* (1907), no. 6, p. 62 and Schwarz, pp. 44ff.

be suppressed as subversive. This undermined the effect of the regulations of 4 March 1906, which for the first time gave trade unions a narrowly circumscribed legal right to exist.¹ In the wake of the revolution industrial conditions were more than usually grim. Unemployment was widespread, and the effect of wage increases was largely cancelled out by rising prices.² Physical exhaustion, together with the arrest and exile of the more militant elements, prevented ameliorations being won by strike action. According to official statistics the total number of labour disputes, which had reached 13,995 in 1905, fell to 6,114 in 1906 and 3,573 in 1907; the proportion settled in favour of the employers rose from 29.4 per cent. in 1905 to 57.6 per cent. in 1907.³ Most of the strikes that occurred were non-political, and involved tradesmen and artisans rather than workers in manufacturing industry. A certain improvement in wages and working conditions took place after 1907, as the economy regained its forward momentum. It was reflected most clearly in the position of the more highly-skilled and better-paid groups. But the general climate in industry was unfavourable to the development of any pronounced degree of social differentiation, and all workers suffered equally from the restrictions placed on political activity.

In these circumstances it was difficult for the R.S.D.R.P. to overcome the immaturity that had been its principal distinguishing feature in the preceding years. Its whole history hitherto had been one of continual internal strife. It had never boasted a united team of leaders, or policies that commanded general acceptance. After 1905 the factional conflict continued with unabated force, despite the attempts made to bring about unity.

These efforts began in the 'days of freedom', when Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were both pursuing a policy of insurrection, and the doctrinal differences between them had ceased to be perceptible to the average Party member. In his eyes the schism, which he had never really comprehended, now seemed more pointless than ever. Most people in the Party took the view that, once the *émigrés* returned to Russia and became preoccupied with practical affairs, they would learn to work together in a spirit of mutual understanding. They sought to promote peace and concord among the leaders by enforcing unity from below. It was in response to this pressure that in many towns Federal Councils (or Committees) were set up during the autumn of 1905. Usually they consisted of an equal number of representatives from each faction.

¹ *Polnoye sobranie zakonov*, xxvi. no. 27479. See V. V. Svyatlovsky, *Professional'noye dvizhenie v Rossii* (Spb., 1907), pp. 120ff.; V. Grinevich, pp. 78ff.; M. Gordon, *Workers before and after Lenin* (N.Y., 1942), p. 57.

² A. Balabanov, *Ot 1905 k 1917 g.* (M.-Lg., 1927), p. 19; *OD*, ii. 334.

³ V. Varzar, *Statistika stachek . . . za 1906-8 gg.* (Spb., 1910), p. 3.

The activists offered a certain amount of resistance to this trend. At Odessa, for example, as one of them records:

The [Bolshevik] committee realized that a proposal to unite would be passed by a huge majority at meetings of Party members, whether Bolsheviks or Mensheviks, as the advocates of unity obtained all the votes wherever they spoke. We were therefore obliged to work out terms for unification, although we were not in favour of it, as otherwise it would have taken place unconditionally.¹

A similar merger took place at Baku in December.² The Georgian Mensheviks were also lukewarm about this movement, which was sanctioned by the factional leaders in St. Petersburg.³ The position of Martov and Trotsky apparently was that such mergers should be carried out everywhere at a local level, after which the two central bodies, the C.C. and the O.C., should set up a joint commission, on a parity basis, to agree upon and implement a plan for complete integration. This was the view put forward by the Mensheviks in the desultory negotiations during the summer and early autumn with Bogdanov and Krasin. The latter were inclined to accept these proposals, and were prevented from doing so only by strenuous efforts on the part of Lenin.⁴

As always, the Bolshevik leader was concerned to preserve the identity of his own supporters. Whatever formal concessions they made to the popular desire for unity, they should continue to exist secretly as an independent nucleus, ready to withdraw if there was any danger of their succumbing to the influence of their associates. 'We should not confuse the policy of uniting two parts with that of merging them. To unite the two parts—agreed. To merge them—never.' First it was necessary for the Bolsheviks to consolidate their hold on each local committee, forming 'a firm nucleus, albeit not a very big one', until they were strong enough to force their opponents to amalgamate with them. Then each faction should call its own supporters together simultaneously, and work out an agreement to merge. The object of this procedure was to preserve a semblance of equity while making certain that the Bolsheviks would hold the levers of power within the Party.⁵

The Menshevik leaders' approach seems to have been compounded of two elements: a rather naïve trust in the extent to which the Bolsheviks had been, or soon would be, reformed by their experience of 'open' activity; and an element of calculation, since in such conditions they could hope to outmanoeuvre their rivals, and so regain some of the ground they had lost during the summer. They were eager to take advantage of the movement of opinion among the rank and file. Accordingly in November they decided to call a conference of their supporters

¹ O. Pyatnitsky, *Zapiski bol'shevika* (Lg., 1925), pp. 71ff. ² *DiM*, iv (iii), 750-1.

³ *OD*, iii. 588.

⁴ *Lenin*, viii. 484, 501.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 247, 501.

that would force the Bolsheviks either to accept a full merger or risk exposure as opponents of unity. To symbolize their desire to bury the hatchet, they accepted Lenin's version of the famous Paragraph One—a gesture devoid of any real content. They also agreed that 'the R.S.D.R.P. shall be organized according to the principle of democratic centralism', which apparently signified acceptance of Lenin's views on strict Party discipline, although it was by no means clear what this term implied.¹

The plans for this conference were well advanced when Lenin returned to Russia. He saw that he had to move quickly if the Bolsheviks were not to be manoeuvred into a merger, while the popularity of the Menshevik-controlled St. Petersburg Soviet made it necessary to reinvigorate the Party as a counterweight. Lenin tackled both these problems at once by causing the C.C. to issue an announcement on 10 November advising local committees and groups not to attend the conference called by the Mensheviks (owing to 'lack of time for preparation'), but instead to appear in force at a Party congress, to be held one month later. To this the C.C. invited 'representatives from the entire periphery'; even organizations with less than 300 members were to be eligible to send a delegate. These men were to be given a consultative vote, but 'as soon as the congress assembles we shall propose that . . . [they] be given full voting rights. We have no doubt that our proposal will be accepted.' The congress would then admit the Menshevik representatives and pronounce the Party re-united.²

It was an ingenious scheme for utilizing delegates from the 'periphery' to swamp his opponents. Lenin calculated that these unsophisticated men could be persuaded to support the C.C., which had honoured them with its invitation; at any rate, the risk would be less than if the Menshevik plan were adopted, since the 'hard' elements would then be lost amidst the mass of uncommitted rank-and-file voters in each constituency. Meanwhile, in a series of articles in *Novaya Zhizn*, Lenin called for a bold 'reform' of the Party. By this he meant the admission of large numbers of new recruits while retaining the conspiratorial apparatus intact. The latter provision, he explained, made it safe to call for the general application within the Party of the electoral principle; he was of course careful not to define the voters' powers.³

Before the implications of Lenin's moves could be digested the

¹ Ibid., pp. 466–7.

² Ibid., p. 463. A footnote to this resolution stated that it had been adopted 'unanimously by the *full* complement of the CC'—a hint to loyal Leninists who did not already know that their leader had returned, and that this message should be treated with more attention than those adopted in his absence by the vacillating Bogdanov and his friends.

³ Ibid., pp. 373–81.

insurrectionary movement came to a head, thus preventing the realization of his design. The gathering convoked by the C.C. had to be held in the relative security of Finland, at Tammerfors (12-17 December). Since the delegates from Moscow and several other towns were unable to attend, it was decided to call the meeting a conference rather than a full congress. This made it necessary to summon yet another gathering in order to bring about unification. Lenin had insisted throughout that the Bolsheviks should present themselves at any such congress *en bloc*. But at Tammerfors the delegates adopted a modified version of the scheme put forward at the Menshevik conference in November, whereby deputies were to be elected locally on a secret ballot, in which all Party members were free to take part. Nothing was said about representation of the 'periphery' or granting full voting rights to delegates with limited mandates. In other words, Lenin's whole concept of flooding the congress with reliable supporters was abandoned, and a real effort was made to ensure that it should reflect prevailing opinion in the Party. The regularity of the elections was to be controlled by bipartisan electoral commissions in each constituency, and disputes were to be resolved by a body known as the 'united practical centre', on which Lenin's position was far from strong. The most that he could salvage was a ruling that candidates for election should put forward a 'platform'—i.e. should clearly identify themselves either with one faction or the other.¹

Tammerfors showed that the Bolsheviks, while acknowledging Lenin as their leader, were not as yet willing to make the Party his personal instrument. When the so-called 'unity congress' met, at Stockholm in April 1906, it had a Menshevik majority: 62 delegates, as against 46 Bolsheviks. This reflected fairly accurately the strength of the two factions at this time. The resolutions which the congress adopted gave endorsement to the Menshevik line, and they controlled the new Central Committee. Lenin refused to reconcile himself to a position of inferiority: maintaining that his opponents' majority at the congress was 'artificial', he once again launched a campaign against the Central Committee for yet another congress—the fifth in the Party's history. The situation was thus reminiscent of that after the second congress in 1903, except in one important respect: the tide was now running against the Party, not in its favour. Reluctant recognition of this harsh truth made the atmosphere particularly bitter.

The years that followed saw a wearying succession of schisms and shifting alliances, in which the only constant was the Bolshevik leader's quest for absolute personal authority. Never did he cease to doubt

¹ Text in *Lenin*, viii. 464-5. On this conference see G. Kramolnikov, in *Trudy I-oy vsesoyuznoy konferentsii istorikov-marksistov* (M., 1927), i. 210-47.

his own rectitude or to condemn all his rivals as deviators from the path of virtue. They for their part were easily confused by his skilful propaganda, and failed to appreciate the essential simplicity of his operating technique. They never lost hope that his powers of leadership could somehow be placed at the service of the Party as a whole. But unity proved to be a mirage, always just out of reach. Lenin was too influential for the Party to unite against him. But neither could it unite under his control. For it was only one among many competing sects, and men could change their allegiance whenever they wished. So long as this freedom of opinion existed, the goal of total conformity was just a pipe-dream. It was as though Russian Social Democracy were labouring under some diabolical curse, destined to struggle against itself indefinitely, until its discords should be settled in the flames of civil war.

[Factional strife was but the outward symptom of a more fundamental malaise, which stemmed from the fact that the R.S.D.R.P., professedly a proletarian party, was in reality an organization of revolutionary intellectuals with only a modicum of popular support. Its structure was most unsound.] Despite the expansion of its influence in 1905 there was still a wide gulf between the leaders and the rank-and-file members. As a rule the latter had only a superficial knowledge of the Party's aims or doctrines, and even less influence over its policies.¹ In its governing bodies there was a superfluity of men with middle-class backgrounds. [At the fourth congress intellectuals outnumbered workers by nearly three to one.] The fifth congress in 1907 registered an improvement in this respect: about one-third of the deputies could claim proletarian origin.² It was the intellectuals who set the tone at this gathering, the proceedings of which reflected little credit on their capacity for leadership. The delegates, more than 300 in number, were divided into six groups, ranging in size from the Bolsheviks with 90 delegates and the Mensheviks with 86 to the Trotskyists with only 4. Each of them attempted to enforce strict voting discipline upon its members. There were few evident signs of comradeship: the different factions behaved towards one another as though they were rival political parties. [Of the thirty-five sessions no less than twenty-two were spent debating reports

¹ Describing the Moscow organization in 1906, Cherevanin stated that 'barely one [member] in three attends factory meetings, while an even smaller proportion make regular payments to Party funds; in any case those who have even the vaguest idea of the Party programme must be counted, not in thousands, but in hundreds' (*Politicheskoye polozhenie i takticheskiye problemy* (M., 1906), p. 140).

² The figures are 106 and 36 for the fourth congress, 192 and 130 for the fifth (*Prot. IV*, p. 481; *Prot. V*, pp. 659ff.). The 56 'professional revolutionaries' at the latter gathering have been classified as intellectuals.

submitted by the Central Committee and the Party's deputies in the Duma. Neither of these tedious exchanges had the slightest practical result.) As on previous occasions, much of the agenda was disposed of hastily at the last moment. The congress cost over 100,000 roubles, and financial difficulties more than once threatened to put a halt to the deliberations. In almost a month of discussion less was achieved than a more mature political party could have settled in the space of a single week-end.) It was not surprising that this congress proved to be the last in the history of the R.S.D.R.P.: subsequent gatherings to which the title of congress were given were attended only by representatives of individual factions.¹

The strength of the R.S.D.R.P. cannot be ascertained with any degree of precision, since there was no formal registration of members. One estimate for the spring of 1907 gave a figure of 148,639. This suspiciously accurate total was arrived at by adding together the number of 'organized workers' who took part in the elections to the fifth congress. It included the Polish S.D.K.P.L. (25,654), the Jewish Bund (25,468) and the Latvian L.S.D.R.P. (approx. 13,000). The remainder included 46,143 Bolsheviks and 38,174 Mensheviks.² These figures probably err on the side of generosity, and are none too impressive when set against a total industrial population of over three million. (One striking feature of the Party's make-up was its comparative youthfulness.) The average age of its members in 1907 was said to be as low as 18.³ Some allowance must be made for propagandist exaggeration: Party spokesmen were anxious to claim the allegiance of the rising generation, and dismissed the argument that youthfulness might indicate lack of maturity. The proportion of adolescents in the local organizations was certainly high, and their role was by no means unimportant. They were particularly useful as couriers and fund-raisers.

With the revolution in decline finance became a more worrying problem than ever. The assistance formerly derived from bourgeois

¹ *Protokoly s'yezdov VKP(b): pyatyy s'yezd, 1907 g.* (M., 1935) [cited as *Prot. V*]. See A. Levin, in *Journal of Modern History* (1939), xi. 484-508; Cherevanin, *Londonskiy s'yezd 1907 g.* (Spb., 1907); F. I. Dan, *S.-demokratiya v rezolyutsiyakh Londonskogo s'yezda* (Spb., 1907).

² M. N. Lyadov, in *Itogi Londonskogo s'yezda* (Spb., 1907), p. 84. These figures are roughly corroborated by a survey conducted in the autumn of 1906 for an independent radical newspaper, which gave estimates by regions for a total of over 143,000 members, distributed as follows: Jewish Bund 33,000, S.D.K.P.L. 28,000, L.S.D.R.P. 13,000, southern and western provinces 23,000, Moscow and central industrial region 19,000, Transcaucasia 13,000, Urals 6,000, northern Caucasus 3,000. The remainder were from north-western Russia, Siberia, and Central Asia. (Cited in *Lenin*, x. 483.) There were from 6,000 to 7,000 members in each of the two capital cities (*ibid.*, xi. 565). See other figures in *Sotsial-demokrat*, nos. 3, 4 (13, 20 October 1906).

³ *Prot. V*, p. 558.

sympathizers diminished to a trickle. Savva Morozov and his nephew Schmidt ended their lives by suicide. (The latter left the Party a small legacy, the apportionment of which caused a major scandal.) Only minute sums were forthcoming from membership dues. In 1906 the Party authorities in Transcaucasia made a determined effort to enforce the rule that local organizations should subscribe 10 per cent. of their income to the Central Committee, but only two committees responded—and then for no longer than a few months.¹ In that year the income of the C.C. amounted to 81,000 roubles, of which only 3,500 roubles came from members' contributions. Of this sum about half was provided by the Letts, the smallest party; the Russian members subscribed a total of 750 roubles—the equivalent of 0.07 kopecks per head.²

The Party's financial situation had an important effect upon its character as an organization, by encouraging the drift towards terrorism. Attempts were made to seize funds from official institutions and private business enterprises. These 'expropriations', as they were euphemistically called, were a conspicuous feature of the Russian scene after 1905. The social upheavals of that year augmented the number of people—quite considerable even in normal times—who lived outside the framework of ordered society. These men, in many cases fugitives from justice, were attracted to acts of violence in which the political element could not always be distinguished from the criminal. In some areas gangs of armed bandits engaged in 'partisan warfare' against individuals who in their view represented the authority of the State. Their leaders, if they adopted a political stand, generally called themselves anarchists or Socialist-Revolutionaries. But some of the militia units formed under Social-Democratic influence in 1905 continued to exist long after their original *raison d'être* had disappeared, and for many Party members terrorism had an irresistible appeal. Social Democrats were involved in a great robbery at Tiflis in March 1906 which cost the Government 316,000 roubles, and another in Moscow a few days earlier which yielded a haul of 875,000 roubles.³

The more responsible Party leaders condemned such activity as incompatible with Marxist principles and warned that it could lead to 'the complete disorganization and demoralization of the working class'.⁴ They pointed out that it was likely to deprive the Party of the goodwill of the man in the street as well as of middle-class elements, and that it was difficult, if not impossible, to keep the 'expropriators' under

¹ *Doklad o deyatel'nosti oblastnogo komiteta zakavkazskikh s.-d. organizatsiy* (?Tiflis, 1908), p. 5.

² *Prot. V*, p. 630.

³ *Lenin*, xi. 471; B. D. Wolfe, *Three who made a revolution* (N.Y., 1948), pp. 371-98.

⁴ *Politicheskoye polozhenie i takticheskiye problemy* (M., 1906), pp. 87ff.

proper Party control. Lenin, on the other hand, was strongly sympathetic to such tendencies. Partly it was a simple question of self-interest: the proceeds of 'expropriations' in which his followers took part could be used to promote the cause of his own faction. Martov later alleged that the Bolsheviks' large representation at the fifth congress was due solely to their command of secret financial resources.¹ It was also a question of underlying psychological and political attitudes. Lenin was for militancy at any price: now that the masses' zeal for revolution was waning, he transferred his attention to the activities of a dedicated *élite*. In the summer of 1906 he called quite outspokenly for the establishment of 'small groups of five or three' to wage an energetic armed struggle on the people's behalf.² He was contemptuous of the idea that terrorist excesses posed a serious threat to the Party's integrity, since his own position in the leadership would provide an adequate guarantee that any harmful anarchist tendencies could be checked in time. When some zealous 'partisans' suggested that the Party chiefs should abdicate their authority in favour of those who were bearing the brunt of the struggle, he quickly quashed the proposal.³

Lenin was sufficiently loyal to traditional doctrine to regard expropriations and individual terror as subordinate to the actions of the proletariat as a class. Nevertheless the extent of the Bolsheviks' involvement in this form of warfare indicated how far they had departed from those methods of operation which most Marxists, in Russia or elsewhere, considered permissible. They collaborated smoothly with the 'Maximalists', as the terrorist elements among the S.R.s now called themselves, in effecting a number of *coups*. By 1907 it was becoming increasingly obvious that, despite their commitment to Marxism, the Bolsheviks had a good deal in common with the nationalist revolutionary parties that existed in various parts of Eastern Europe and the Near East. Where they differed from them was in the stress they laid on ideological conformity and strict discipline.

Meanwhile many Mensheviks were coming round to the view that the Party should adapt its practices more closely to accord with those normal in Western Europe. This implied both a democratic reform of the R.S.D.R.P. and a shift of emphasis from clandestine to 'open' work in trade unions, co-operatives, and similar mass organizations, in so far as the relaxation of police controls made this possible. Some Mensheviks looked forward to the day when there would exist in Russia a broad representative body akin to the Labour Party in Great Britain. Such a party, they held, could expect to attract about one million

¹ [Yu. O.] Martov, *Spasiteli ili uprazdniteli?* (Paris, 1911), p. 3.

² *Lenin*, x, 12.

³ *Lenin*, xi, 213-14; *Istoricheskiy arkhiv* (1959), no. 1, p. 165.

members. Its establishment would be 'the first step towards Europeanizing the forms of our movement'.¹ Others went back to the ideas of the so-called Economists and suggested forming, not a party, but an 'all-Russian labour union', which they hoped would secure an even larger following. The first step was to be the convocation of a 'workers' congress', such as Axelrod had proposed in the summer of 1905—although this idea was now given a new slant of which its author did not wholly approve.²

As was only to be expected, the Party activists, who had a vested interest in the perpetuation of the *status quo*, were overwhelmingly opposed to such plans. At the fifth congress a resolution was passed formally condemning them. The advocates of reform were soon given the derogatory name of 'liquidators' (which, characteristically, they accepted almost without protest). Their critics had a certain amount of common sense on their side. It could be argued that the existence of two labour parties, one 'broad' and one 'narrow', would merely aggravate the confusion and dissension on the left. There was an element of utopianism in the Mensheviks' hope that a fresh start, whatever the cost, might bring total deliverance from the evils that plagued the Party. This stemmed from their underlying faith that the masses, if allowed full freedom of expression, would certainly opt for democracy.

The tragedy was that Stolypin's Russia had no place for a 'workers' congress', and that efforts to build up independent labour organizations were frustrated by the police. In this respect the situation was only slightly more promising than it had been prior to 1905. The degree of support which the so-called 'liquidators' obtained is as yet unclear. The conventional view is that their ideas appealed to a relatively small section of the industrial population: craftsmen, artisans, and skilled workers. These groups were, however, rapidly increasing in importance between 1907 and 1914—particularly in the more advanced regions of the country. In the remoter areas, and among the under-privileged elements, memories of 1905 remained vivid. Seeing little hope of progress within the framework of the existing order, such men continued to hope that their problems could best be solved by violent social revolution, and they were unlikely to protest too strongly if this upheaval were led by a militant dictatorial party. Thus was the soil prepared for the harvest that the Bolsheviks were to reap in 1917.

The most obvious difference in the situation of Russian Social Democracy before and after the 1905 revolution was that it acquired

¹ Yu. Larin, *Shirokaya rabochaya partiya i rabochiy s'yezd* (M., 1907), p. 18.

² *Vserossiyskiy rabochiy s'yezd* (M., 1907), p. 13; P. B. Axelrod, *Narodnaya дума i rabochiy s'yezd*, 2nd ed. (Spb., 1907), p. 10.

a voice in the new national legislature. The decree of 11 December 1905 added a fourth *curia*, for industrial workers, to the three previously envisaged by Bulygin's project. The vagaries of the electoral system ensured that even in the third and fourth Dumas, which had built-in conservative majorities, the Social Democrats were certain of a few safe seats. In 1906-7 both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks were obliged to modify their initially hostile attitude towards the Duma.¹ But the change was purely tactical, and did not imply any slackening in the Party's efforts to bring about violent revolution: there was no sympathy within its ranks for the concept of 'a parliamentary road to socialism'. On the contrary, the frank class bias of the Duma electoral law intensified the Social Democrats' opposition on doctrinal grounds to any representative institution not based on manhood suffrage. Only a constituent assembly, they held, could bring the Russian people any real benefits. The task of the Party in a legislature that fell short of this democratic ideal was to expose its inadequacies by utilizing it as a forum in which to propagate their revolutionary creed.

After 1907 there was a growing tendency among Russian intellectuals to question 'the mystique of revolution' and to seek a rapprochement with the society in which they lived. This led many Party sympathizers to dissociate themselves from the R.S.D.R.P. At the same time it made the more dedicated Social Democrats extremely sensitive to possible charges of 'reformism', with the result that they clung as firmly as ever to their traditional beliefs. They continued to view Russian developments within the context of a 'class struggle', with the opposing forces neatly labelled 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat'—although the inadequacies of this approach, one might have thought, had been amply demonstrated by the events of 1905. Their experiences did lead some of them, however, to revise their ideas on revolutionary strategy and tactics.

The Mensheviks still believed that the liberals, despite their weakness, could play a progressive role in a future revolution. In the words of Martynov, at the fifth Party congress, 'the whole history of Russian public life proves that each successive upsurge of revolution . . . infuses fresh blood into the anaemic veins of bourgeois democracy'.² Though there was clearly something to be said for this view, it did not carry much conviction with the average Party member, who could not help recalling that at the time Martynov and his colleagues on *Nachalo* had

¹ Their role in the second Duma has been exhaustively studied by A. Levin (*The second Duma . . .*, New Haven, 1940). On the first Duma, see my article 'Russian Social-Democracy and the First State Duma', in *Slav. and E. Europ. Rev.* (1955), xxxiv. 180-99. The best Soviet work is M. Pavlov, *Dumskaya taktika bol'shevikov v revolyutsii 1905-7 gg.* (Lg., 1947).

² *Prot. V*, p. 429.

preached a very different doctrine. The Mensheviks often seemed to be pining for the liberals to perform the heroic role allotted to them by Marxist theory, while refusing to recognize the Kadets for the radicals they were. One of them wrote wistfully: 'Yes, on principle we are implacably opposed to the Kadets, but perhaps we want a strong self-assured bourgeois-democratic party in Russia just as much as they do themselves.'¹

On the other hand, the Trotskyist and Bolshevik image of the 'liberal bourgeoisie' was a caricature. The whole thrust of their criticism was directed against the 'reactionary' Kadets, on the assumption that they were incapable of modifying their views in a direction more acceptable to the left. The two factions now went their separate ways. The seal was set on their differences when the fifth congress adopted a Bolshevik resolution ruling out any support by the Party for the Kadets, whose activities were simply 'to be utilized in the interests of the political enlightenment of the people'.² They put their trust solely in the peasants—'rural democracy', as the jargon had it. This resolution made it quite clear that the relationship between the proletariat and peasantry was not to be one between equals, since it substituted for the conventional term 'vanguard' the expression 'leader' (*vozhd'*), which had a military ring. Lenin's reasoning was that the peasants had the brute force necessary to overthrow the old régime, and also to weaken the new capitalist system, but were not sufficiently well organized or politically enlightened to withstand control from outside. In Marxist terms, they were lacking in 'consciousness'—and for the Bolsheviks this was by no means a disadvantage. As a rule Lenin preferred to avoid the delicate question of the peasants' political and cultural backwardness, and to judge them by economic criteria alone. By identifying the 'reactionary' aspect of the agrarian movement with the peasants' desire to establish themselves as petty proprietors, and the 'progressive' aspect with their desire to confiscate the large estates, he could argue that the negative characteristics could be safely ignored for the present, since they were relevant only to the final, socialist, phase of revolution.³

The Mensheviks, for their part, had few illusions about the peasants'

¹ E. Smirnov, *Pobeda kadetov i levye partii* (Spb., 1907), p. 9.

² *Prot. V*, p. 490. An introductory clause affirmed that the Party 'has always recognized the need to support all opposition and revolutionary movements directed against absolutism'. This was the accepted formula—except in the use of the past tense. This was not an oversight, since the deputies rejected a Menshevik amendment adding the phrase 'and still recognizes'. The unobtrusive change indicated that the Bolsheviks had renounced the principle, once so ardently championed by Lenin in *Iskra*, that all progressive bourgeois groups were equally deserving of the Party's support.

³ *Prot. V*, p. 389.

ambiguous political attitudes. Cherevanin spoke of their 'terrible ignorance and complete lack of organization'. A colleague pointed out that, although one could read the words 'Land and Liberty' on the peasants' banners, 'it is no secret to most people that it is the "ideologists" who have been most concerned with Liberty. Heaven alone knows what an effort it has taken to drive this idea into the *muzhik's* thick skull.' The most sceptical note was struck by Martynov. 'Anyone who says we are going to have a peasant revolution', he declared, 'must also say that it would take the form of a *Pugachovshchina*.'¹ For this reason the Menshevik agrarian programme, devised by Maslov, was largely concerned with fostering among the peasants an appreciation of the merits of the democratic order that was to replace absolutism.

✓ Lenin, on the other hand, proceeding from the comfortable assumption that the peasants were already fervent democrats, was concerned solely with turning the agrarian movement to the Party's tactical advantage. He advocated nationalization of the land, both as a slogan with which to attract peasant support in the seizure of power, and as a means whereby the revolutionary Government could exercise control over a population of doubtful loyalty. He denied that there was anything necessarily socialist about the measure he proposed: it would enable Russia to develop a progressive capitalist-type agriculture. But it was plain that he covertly hoped that it would undermine the entire bourgeois order, so facilitating a rapid transition to socialism. The social content of nationalization of the land, as Lenin envisaged it, was such that, once he changed his mind about the nature of the impending revolution and decided that it was to be 'proletarian' instead of merely 'bourgeois-democratic', his agrarian programme could be re-labelled with equal ease. Thus in the autumn of 1917, when he republished his work of 1907 on this subject, he could present his arguments as wholly relevant to the situation at that time: it was necessary only to add a cursory postscript explaining that 'now, of course, we no longer regard nationalization simply as the "last word" in a bourgeois revolution, but as a step to socialism'.²

The importance of this issue will be readily apparent: in Russia, whoever controlled the peasants was master of the country. Lenin's ideas met with a good deal of opposition within the Party. Plekhanov argued that nationalization of the land would strengthen immensely the power of the State, and that in Russia, with its tradition of Oriental despotism, this would be particularly dangerous. Historically, he pointed out, State ownership of the land had been the basis of serfdom

¹ *Nashe delo*, no. 1 (24 September 1906); *Itogi i perspektivy* (M., 1906), p. 70; *Prot. IV*, p. 165; *Prot. V*, pp. 400, 461.

² *Lenin*, xi. 589.

and absolutism; if the land were nationalized, and the revolutionaries should be defeated, they would have provided a reactionary Government with a means of regaining control over the rebellious peasantry. He therefore threw his weight behind Maslov's proposals, which provided for decentralization of the State power.¹

Plekhanov's awesome vision of resurgent Oriental despotism in Russia seemed far-fetched to most of his audience, for whom it was axiomatic that capitalism could give way only to socialism. He was coldly informed that talk of a renaissance of feudalism was unrealistic and unhistorical.² In fact he had touched upon a very real problem: the dangers that any revolution in Russia faced as a result of the country's backwardness. Where he erred was in assuming that the threat to popular liberties could arise only from a counter-revolutionary Government, whereas his argument applied with equal force to a revolutionary dictatorship.

Lenin, it seems, was already looking far ahead. He claimed that the peasants themselves were sympathetic to public ownership, and quoted in support resolutions to this effect by Trudovik (Peasant Socialist) deputies in the Duma. But at the same time he held to his earlier view that the peasants saw nationalization as compatible with the maintenance of private ownership over their smallholdings. As he put it: 'in the words "public ownership of land" he envelops the vague idea that the whole mass of peasants are united in their struggle [against the landowners]'.³ It is difficult to resist the conclusion that he was prepared to carry out his plan to impose centralized State control, pretending that it enjoyed the peasants' support, although he was fully aware that they would reject such a system as soon as they had tasted the delights of individual ownership. When this happened, and they began to ventilate their disillusionment, the machinery of the proletarian State was to be brought to bear against them.

To the question what attitude the workers' party should adopt towards a possible demand by the farmers for a repartition [of public land], one may give a perfectly explicit reply. The proletariat is obliged to support the bourgeoisie when it is militant, when it is waging a genuinely revolutionary struggle against feudalism. But it is not the task of the proletariat to support the bourgeoisie when it is becoming appeased. If it is indubitable that a victorious bourgeois revolution is impossible in Russia without nationalization of the land, then it is even more indubitable that a subsequent change in the direction of partition would be impossible without

¹ *Plekhanov*, xv. 67-76; see S. H. Baron, 'Plekhanov's Russia: the impact of the West upon an "oriental" society', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1958), xix. 388-404.

² *Prot. IV*, p. 103; *Lenin*, ix. 187.

³ *Lenin*, xi. 392.

a certain 'restoration', without a *volte-face* by the farmers to the side of counter-revolution. The proletariat will defend the revolutionary tradition against all such trends, and will not assist them.¹

One is inevitably reminded of his remark five years earlier: 'it's no use wasting words where you've got to use force'.² The context, admittedly, was different: the remark that had aroused the indignation of Zasulich had concerned the ultimate socialist revolution; here he was considering resistance to 'capitalist' nationalization in a 'bourgeois' revolution. But the distinction was more apparent than real. By 1907 Lenin was already anticipating the *leitmotif* of Soviet agrarian policy: the revolutionary dictatorship was to impose its will, by force if necessary, upon a recalcitrant peasantry.

At this point the objection may be raised that neither in 1902 nor in 1907 did Lenin expect that the path to socialism in Russia would take the many curious turns it did. It was not until he published his *April Theses* in 1917 that he broke with the accepted view that the forthcoming revolution could only be 'bourgeois-democratic'. Nevertheless, the whole history of Russian Social Democracy during the period 1904-7 testified to its leaders' readiness to shift doctrinal landmarks according to the ebb and flow of the revolutionary current. Their reactions were determined very largely by individual temperament. Trotsky and Parvus occupied one end of the political spectrum, Plekhanov and Axelrod the other. Lenin's position was an intermediate one. Caught between his drive for power and his doctrinal scruples, he failed to provide a clear lead. But 1905 gave him greater self-assurance. Possibly he realized that the scope of the next revolution could be determined to a large extent by his own preferences, to which he could give a cloak of respectability by putting a novel and arbitrary construction upon Marxist doctrine. By 1917, after three years of war, the soldiers, workers, and peasants had been stirred to a pitch of feverish excitement far surpassing anything known in 1905. In these circumstances Lenin felt able to raise his sights: to pursue a frankly opportunistic policy designed to place his party in power, exploiting with equal skill the divisions among his opponents and the hopes or prejudices of the turbulent crowds. The theoretical adjustment involved was relatively slight: it was merely necessary for the 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' to shed some of its inelegant verbosity, and it could re-emerge in its original Marxist guise as the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'—camouflaged, for tactical purposes, by the slogan 'All power to the Soviets'.

The Mensheviks of 1917 were left clinging to the shreds of ancient

¹ *Lenin*, p. 416.

² See above, p. 114.

dogma. They were reluctant to take up their share of governmental responsibility, lest they thereby betray the working class to the bourgeoisie. At first they sought to provide 'revolutionary opposition' from the vantage-point of the soviets. This was soon shown to be an extravagant luxury at a time when 'bourgeois democracy' faced a very real threat from the left as well as from the right. When they at length abandoned this untenable position, in a desperate effort to stem the drift to chaos and civil war, they did so with misgivings and continuous apologetic glances towards their supporters. This ambiguous attitude inevitably lost them public esteem. It was easy for Bolshevik propagandists to depict them as 'agents of the imperialist bourgeoisie'. In reality their vacillations were due to their manful efforts to reconcile their loyalty to socialism with their loyalty to democracy. Axelrod had long ago declared that the survival of the Party would depend on its success in combining its two tasks: 'socialist' and 'general democratic'. Already in 1905 this had proved impossible: under pressure from below most Menshevik leaders had opted for 'socialism'. By 1917 their freedom of choice was still more limited. The Social Democrats had either to discard past prejudices and sink their identity in a coalition of the centre, determined to maintain order and defend democratic liberties, or else to seize power, ostensibly on the people's behalf, and institute a revolutionary dictatorship in the hope that this desperate expedient would somehow be justified by its results. The Mensheviks could not make a clear-cut decision: true to tradition, they split. For their hesitations they had to pay the price of political self-effacement. The Bolsheviks, at Lenin's insistent prompting, opted boldly for the latter course. At first they seemed to carry all before them. However, history was to take its revenge for their temerity.

In earlier years there had been no lack of warnings as to the perils involved in the seizure of power by a revolutionary minority. Plekhanov attacked the idea from the 1880's onwards; he was to die a disillusioned man, not long after the Bolshevik October, because his teachings had been so conspicuously ignored. Akimov repeated on several occasions the admonition he had given after the second congress.¹ Another sympathetic critic wrote in 1907: 'socialism *can* be introduced artificially, by means of a military dictatorship, but it cannot be consolidated or made into a vital phenomenon. Absolute monarchy affords many examples of the failure of such social experiments based on "strong power".'² In fact this was something of a shibboleth among those influenced by Marxist determinism, who vastly underrated the capacity

¹ 'If our Party were to conquer all others . . . this would bring the country to catastrophe and throw it back once more to the epoch of political and social reaction' (*Obrazovanie* (1907), no. 4, p. 114).

² A. Gellius, *Mysli o russkoy revolyutsii* (Spb., 1907), p. 75.

of a modern dictatorship, with all the resources of technology at its disposal, to ensure its own survival. Nevertheless, the problem was real enough: how could socialism be introduced by revolution in a country so ill prepared for it, without thereby losing its libertarian essence?

The rise to power of Russian Social Democracy, and the significance of the factional schism within its ranks, can be properly assessed only in the light of Russia's situation, at the beginning of the twentieth century, as the most advanced 'under-developed country'. In this milieu Marxism underwent a transmutation both in its social function and its theoretical content. It is possible here to touch briefly only on those aspects of this question that are immediately relevant to our theme.¹

The personality and teachings of Karl Marx, as many critics have pointed out, contained two discordant elements, which may be called for the sake of convenience the scientific and the prophetic. There is Marx the scholar, carefully analysing the laws governing capitalist society and forecasting a proletarian revolution in the fullness of time, once the 'objective' social and technological conditions for it had matured. And there is Marx the moralist, passionately denouncing bourgeois society for its wickedness, and welcoming popular insurrectionary movements as the harbingers of an egalitarian millennium. Since the essence of Marxism is the unity of thought and action, the two elements could be formally reconciled—at least to Marx's own satisfaction, and during his lifetime. But the rapid pace of change in every field of human endeavour, together with greater understanding of the complexities of modern society, soon made it impossible to uphold the founder's teaching *in toto*. In Western Europe socialist parties that accepted Marxist postulates were obliged to adjust their practical activity, and ultimately their ideas as well, to existing realities. The spread of 'reformist' ideas followed naturally from the fact that Western society was becoming 'post-industrial': it was obvious that men enjoying the prospect of rapid improvements in their economic and social well-being, and participating freely in a common national culture, could not respond with the eagerness of their forebears to calls for violent class struggle. At least, such strife was seen as a means of winning immediate improvements rather than of bringing about a utopia wholly unrelated to the existing social order. This process was of course uneven, and was interrupted by the First World War and its aftermath; nevertheless, the general trend of development in Western

¹ For a stimulating essay on the subject, see A. Ulam, *The unfinished revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960).

countries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was towards mass acceptance of liberal and democratic values. Socialists normally sought to realize their ideals by non-violent means, and only sectarian 'fringe' groups, with limited popular appeal, remained insistent on revolution. Where Marxist thought continued to exercise an influence, it did so not as a political force but rather on the abstract intellectual plane. Many people were ready to acknowledge Marx's role as one of the founders of modern social science, but his attempt to formulate an all-embracing theory of progress was dismissed as an historical curiosity.

The situation was very different in Eastern Europe and other parts of the world where the industrial revolution had yet to run its course, and where the social structure and political system were still archaic. In Russia the resulting tensions were unusually acute. In such countries it was possible for revolutionary situations to occur, particularly where war undermined the stability of authoritarian régimes. These upheavals were, however, not revolutions in the Marxist sense, of proletarians against capitalists, but of peasants and urbanized ex-peasants eager to ventilate their pent-up resentment against the privileged *élite* and to share in the country's newly-acquired wealth. In such circumstances opportunities arose for radical parties, led by members of the intelligentsia, to win mass support, and even to seize power. This they could do only if they had some secular faith capable of mobilizing popular enthusiasm on their behalf. For this role Marxism was well suited—provided that its adepts borrowed only its utopian, prophetic element, and did not attach too much importance to its claims as a scientific theory. These claims had their function in that they enhanced the prestige of Marxism as a faith, but they were not taken seriously as a guide to action. In this way Marxism, which began as a philosophy, was transmuted into a creed, and ultimately into an ideology that could be manipulated at will to suit the interests of a revolutionary régime. After the seizure of power its chief use was as a means of legitimizing the authority of the new rulers, and its role thus became pre-eminently conservative, rather than revolutionary. In historical retrospect it may be seen that Marxism, as a revolutionary doctrine, could have a mass appeal only in countries that stood at a particular point on the road of social evolution: the stage of incipient industrialization. In the twentieth century it could become a potent force solely in those parts of the world where, according to its founders' premisses, it should have had little success. The end-result was that, instead of becoming a means of uniting the world under the leadership of the proletarians of Western Europe, as had originally been anticipated, Marxism became an agency of division, and even a means of

stimulating nationalistic assaults by the economically less advanced countries upon the industrialized West.

Seen in this perspective, the Russian revolution of 1905 stands out as the first revolution of the 'under-developed' type that was to become characteristic of the twentieth century. Although indecisive in its results, in many ways it anticipated a pattern that was to be followed later both in Russia itself and in other non-Western areas of the globe. It was a spontaneous and somewhat anarchic upheaval which opened up extensive opportunities for the parties of the left, despite their numerical weakness, to win widespread popular backing. Of all the radical groups the Social Democrats, armed with a prestigious faith, were the best placed. That they did not succeed in rallying the entire opposition behind them and overthrowing the old order was due partly to circumstances beyond their control and partly to a lack of imagination on their part. Even those of their leaders who were prepared to go furthest along the road of tactical opportunism were inhibited by their acceptance of the traditional view that Russia belonged to Europe and that her development must inevitably proceed along the same lines as in the advanced capitalist countries of the West—a view long since contested by the Populists.]

The idea that the Bolsheviks were the spiritual heirs of the Populist 'Jacobins' has become so familiar to students of modern Russia that there is a risk of over-emphasizing the connexion. There seems good reason to suppose that, in formulating his élitist concept of the Party's functions and organizational structure, Lenin was influenced by the traditions of *Narodnaya Volya*.] He may also have derived from the radical Populists his readiness to resort to physical violence, his appreciation of the revolutionary potential inherent in the peasantry, and his ingrained contempt for reformist liberalism.] Behind the common ground in political ideas was an underlying affinity of psychological attitudes: a deeply-rooted sense of insecurity, offset by a strong will. Like the Jacobins, the Bolsheviks feared that the revolutionary movement might become corrupted by bourgeois values, and sought insurance against this possibility in centralized control imposed from above. Both also felt a compulsion to 'demonize' their opponents and to equate backsliding by supporters with deliberate subservience to the enemy. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether these traits should be seen as specific to the Russian Populist tradition, since they may be found among radical extremists everywhere in the world. It could also be argued that the points of difference between Leninism and Populism are more important than the parallels. It would be difficult to find among Lenin's forerunners anyone who combined his personal qualities: his single-minded pursuit of power, his moral relativism, and his gift for

deriving the maximum tactical advantage from any political situation. Moreover, Lenin was constantly on his guard against the charge that he was making a nationalistic deviation from Marxist doctrine. He never claimed, as in the circumstances it might have been logical to do, that conditions specific to Russia made it necessary to amend or abandon something that Marx had written.

And yet the factional division among the Russian Social Democrats may be seen as a continuation of the dialogue between Slavophiles and westernizers that was the central theme of nineteenth-century Russian intellectual history. 'Slavophile Marxists': this was the title of a polemical article directed against the Bolsheviks in one Party organ in 1906.¹ Their 'Slavophilism' was evident in their readiness to exaggerate the level of culture and political maturity of the Russian masses in comparison with workers in the West, who had enjoyed the precious advantages of political liberty as well as higher material and educational standards. In this the Bolsheviks were influenced by the Marxist emphasis on the primacy of economic factors: by concentrating their attention on the rapid growth of industry in Russia, they could claim that it differed from other 'capitalist' countries only in degree, and turn a blind eye to the lack of progress in other fields.

Lenin, it is true, was less prone to this error than many of his more extreme followers. Among left-wing Bolsheviks one could detect, already at this time, a note of messianic nationalism. A contributor to the Moscow journal *Vestnik Zhizni* ('Messenger of Life') wrote:

Russian Social Democracy finds itself in exceptionally propitious circumstances. Never before has a labour party been formed . . . in a country that can boast such a high level of industrial development and proletarian class consciousness. Whereas other labour parties have had to forge the class consciousness of their workers in the course of a long series of stubborn and often unsuccessful blows upon cold metal, our Social Democracy is working with red-hot iron which easily assumes the form we desire. We do not yet possess the historical tradition that so often acts as a mighty brake upon the development of a labour movement. The only tradition we have is an ardent belief in the gospel of socialism and an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and for battle. And with these one can work miracles.²

The same tendency can be noted in the remarkable lack of response evoked among many Bolshevik *émigrés* by their experiences in Western Europe. Their memoir literature contains many expressions of distaste

¹ 'Slavofil'stvuyushchiye marksisty', *Sotsial-demokrat*, no. 2 (6 October 1906).

² *Vestnik zhizni* (1907), no. 4, p. 101.

for the 'philistinism' they found there.¹ This did not of course prevent Lenin and his followers from seeing themselves as an integral part of the international socialist movement. They harboured a genuine respect for German Social Democracy, as the oldest and largest of European Marxist parties. But when the shock of the First World War dispelled their faith in the Germans' ability to overcome their reformist tendencies, they could replace it fairly easily with the confident belief that Russia, despite her backwardness, had as much to teach foreign socialists as to learn from them. What in 1905 had been little more than a pipe-dream now became a matter of practical politics: the flame of victorious revolution in Russia was to ignite the entire Continent.

It was not without significance that the Bolsheviks should have drawn their strength largely from Great Russia, the Volga region and the Urals, whereas their opponents were more solidly entrenched in the southern and western regions of the country, which had traditionally been zones of inter-cultural contact. The Mensheviks were more cosmopolitan in outlook: although they felt as keenly as anyone the isolation imposed on them by *émigré* life, they reacted in a more perceptive manner to their environment. Many of them established close personal relations with leading European socialists. On one occasion when Axelrod was in a despondent mood, Plekhanov cheered his friend by saying: 'You are first and foremost a European, and that is someone whom it is important to have in every Russian party.'² His words were well chosen: for Axelrod, as for Plekhanov himself, Western Europe always remained the symbol of progress. In the opening pages of his first contribution to the literature of Russian Social Democracy, Plekhanov took his stand 'under the banner of an intelligently conceived Westernism'.³ He remained faithful to this flag throughout his life, never ceasing to scorn the notion, in whatever guise it occurred, that Russia could isolate herself from the Western world to which, on his analysis, it inescapably belonged. He saw the Russian workers as young Europeans, capable of emancipating their country from the relics of an Oriental despotism and allowing it to join the mainstream of world history.

¹ Krupskaya wrote later of the 'abysmal vulgarity' of English working-class life (*Leninskiy sbornik*, iv. 82). Lyadov records that, when he met Karl Liebknecht in 1904, he was repelled by his 'petty-bourgeois' way of life (*Iz zhizni partii* . . ., p. 16). O. Pyatnitsky (*Zapiski bol'shevika*, p. 38) describes his unfavourable impression of the workers he met at this time in Germany. 'When I first attended a [Party] meeting and saw these well-dressed gentry, sitting at tables drinking jugs of beer, I thought I had come across some meeting of bourgeois, for I had never seen workers like that in Russia.' Some allowance must admittedly be made for deliberate bias in view of the circumstances in which these memoirs were written; nevertheless this was, in a manner of speaking, a meeting between two worlds.

² *Perepiska*, i. 59.

³ *Plekhanov*, ii. 27.

The revolution, when it eventually came about, took a turn of which Plekhanov and his colleagues strongly disapproved. It was the tragic paradox of Russian Social Democracy, dedicated as it was to freedom and progress, that it created the instrument that was to crush its own ideals. Its achievements were ambiguous. It inspired millions of men and women with the vision of a new social order in which they expected to find freedom, justice, and scope for true self-fulfilment. This burning faith in the future could easily be perverted, especially when coupled with the relentless pursuit of power. But at the same time the Party helped to awaken in a large section of the population an awareness of their rights as individuals that could never be wholly suppressed. We have traced here only the opening episodes in a protracted drama, of which the *dénouement* has yet to be performed.

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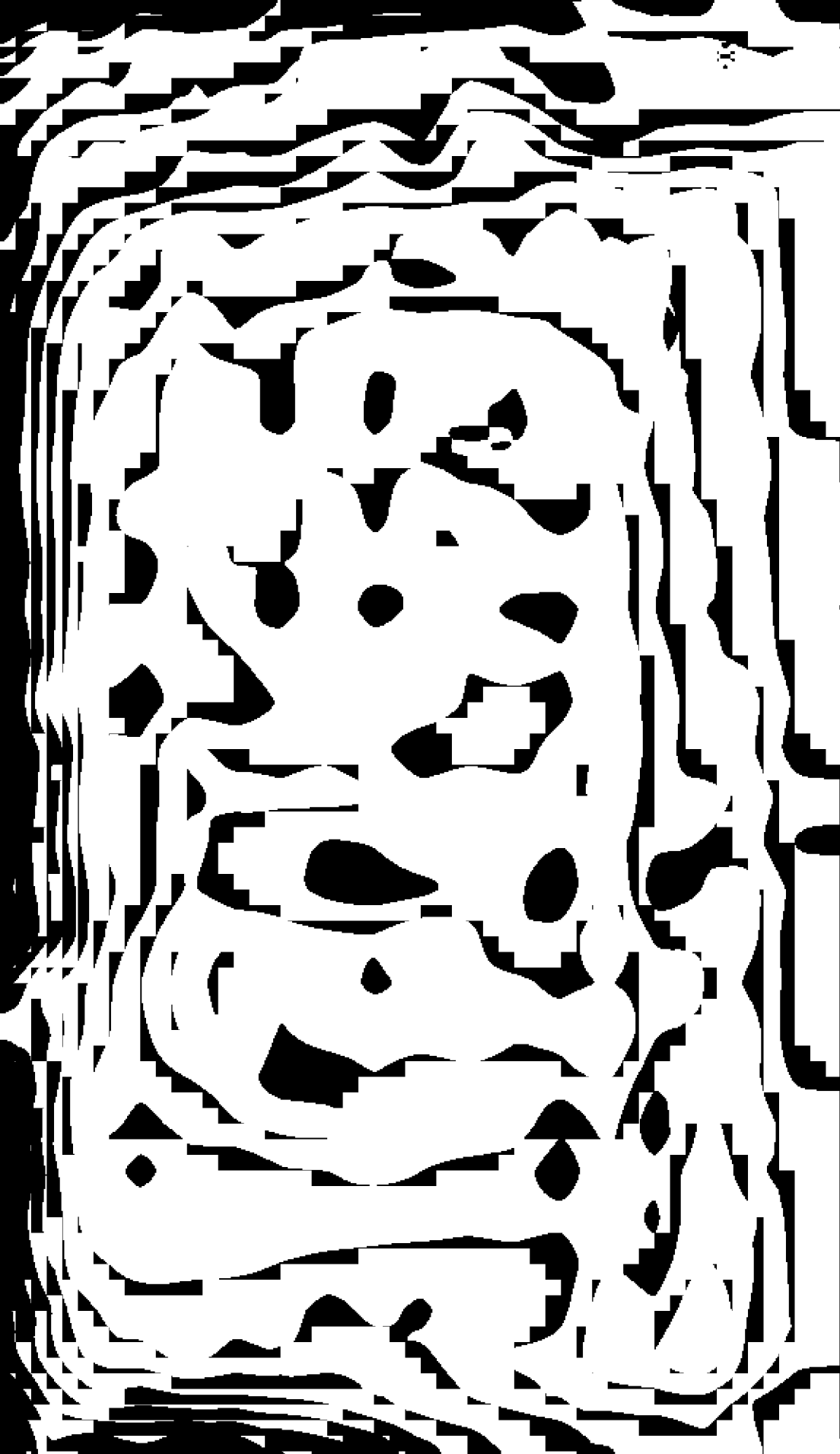
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